

# Saskatchewan HISTORY

★ Metis  
Settlement  
in the  
North-West  
Territories

BY

MARCEL  
GIRAUD

★ Folklore in  
Saskatchewan

BY

ELIZABETH HEIDT





# Saskatchewan History

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# Metis Settlement in the North-west Territories

In 1945 the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Paris published a monumental work on the métis in Canada, thus providing for the first time an adequate historical and sociological analysis of the development of this group in our population. This book, *Le Métis Canadien*,\* was written by M. Marcel Giraud, now Professor of the History of North American Civilization at the Collège de France. Professor Giraud's work is based on an exhaustive examination of a vast quantity of sources in public, Hudson's Bay Company and church archives in Canada, Great Britain and France; in addition Professor Giraud visited all the chief métis settlements in the Prairie Provinces, gathering information on social conditions as they existed before the Second World War. The comprehensive character of his study is evidenced by the fact that it runs to nearly 1,300 pages, containing over 400,000 words.

Being impressed with the important place of the métis in the early history of Saskatchewan and Western Canada generally, *Saskatchewan History* presents in the following pages a translation of a portion of this work, with the object of making some of the information which it contains better known to those who are unable to consult Professor Giraud's book. The chapter which is reproduced here appears in the original under the title "L'exode vers l'Ouest." It was translated for *Saskatchewan History* by Mr. C. M. Chesney, M. A., whose services were made available for this purpose by the Economic Advisory and Planning Board, Government of Saskatchewan. We also wish to acknowledge the generous advice and assistance given by Professor Giraud. Permission to publish this chapter has been granted by the Institute of Ethnology, University of Paris, under the terms of their copyright.

The Editor

## INTRODUCTION

FROM 1870 onward, as if by a kind of rebound action, the Red River colony, whose population had originally been recruited from the large expanses of the West, itself became the starting point of an important exodus back toward these same expanses. Several hundred families abandoned the parishes of the Red River and the Assiniboine through the five years which followed the Insurrection of 1869-70, resulting in a movement which closely resembled the Great Trek of the Boers in its causes and its scope.<sup>1</sup> Discouraged by all the humiliations which had been inflicted upon them, uncertain that their property rights would be recognized, and unable to adapt themselves to the economy which was being established in Manitoba, the métis of the Red River sought a safeguard in the Western plains against persecution from their enemies and a refuge in which they might still freely pursue their customary occupations.

At that time the country beyond Manitoba known as the North-West Territories possessed only an embryonic organization, although it had become Dominion property on July 15, 1870. A police force, the North-West Mounted Police, was established in 1873.<sup>2</sup> From 1871 on, in settlements of some importance like St. Albert and Lake St. Anne, justices of the peace watched over the maintenance of order and the details of administration.<sup>3</sup> The North-West Council (established in 1872) was composed, according to the North-West Territories Act of 1875, of five members appointed by the Federal authorities, and to these some elected

\* Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien. Son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest*. (Paris, 1945). Pp. lvi, 1296.

<sup>1</sup> G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, p. 243, and Memorandum respecting scrips issued to half-breeds . . . , Ottawa, January 2, 1880, (Department of the Interior files, Ottawa.) [In succeeding footnotes the abbreviation "D.I.F." will refer to Department of the Interior files, which when used by M. Giraud were housed in the Vimy Building, Ottawa but which have subsequently been transferred to the Public Archives of Canada.]

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Stanley, *op. cit.*, pp. 191 and 203.

<sup>3</sup> Chronicle of the Lake St. Anne mission, 1871.



members were gradually added later as the settlement of the Western plains developed. The Council assumed elementary administration of the country, directed local finances and meted out justice. Finally, after 1875, the Government at Ottawa was represented by a Lieutenant-Governor resident in the Territories.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1882 that the North-West Territories were divided into provisional districts as the bases for future provinces, and not until 1888 that they obtained representative government through the substitution of a Legislative Assembly for the North-West Council.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the country lived for several years in an elementary political and administrative order which reminded one of the government under the Hudson's Bay Company. The slow penetration of agricultural colonization retarded the coming of White society and its concepts. The indigenous population could therefore resume its favorite way of life unhindered, and the métis who exiled themselves from the Red River found conditions similar to those which had for a long time dominated their existence in the old District of Assiniboia.

The exodus was consequently directed toward this promised land, even with the sanction of the Church, which, when confronted with the ineffectiveness of its own endeavours, gave up all efforts to hold back a population incapable of adopting the concepts of the French race. At the same time, the Oblates offered this people the refuge of their missions and promised the possibility of free acquisition of new lands. For some years already a slow migratory movement had been draining part of the métis population into the Western plains. Apart from periodic departures which were connected with their custom of winter-roving (*hivernement*), and which occasionally even led to absences of several years at a time,<sup>6</sup> the hazards of climate and the resulting misery had brought about the first real exodus among the métis of the Red River well before 1870. Many had reached the missions at St. Laurent (Lake Manitoba) in the hope of escaping the ravages of grasshoppers.<sup>7</sup> Some fifteen families went to the White Mud River Valley (Rivière Blanche) where they built lodgings and took up residence, while others made their way toward the mouth of the Winnipeg River.<sup>8</sup> The largest number went to the Fort Edmonton area, attracted by the settlements already in existence there. In 1863, when drouth seriously jeopardized the harvest of the colony, several fixed their choice on Lake St. Anne.<sup>9</sup> In 1865, and especially 1866, large numbers of métis went to St. Albert and Lake St. Anne, adding to the cores of population which were already established there.<sup>10</sup> Still others left to try their luck among the gold prospectors of the Saskatchewan.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Stanley, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-2. The minutes of the North-West Council have been published by E. H. Oliver, *The Canadian North-West*, Ottawa, 1915, II, pp. 990, *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> Chronicle of the St. Laurent mission (Duck Lake Indian School), 1888. E. H. Oliver, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 1101 *et seq.* Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> Caër, Fort Ellice, August 28, 1863 (Archiepiscopal Archives). [In succeeding footnotes the abbreviation "Arch. Arch." will refer to Archiepiscopal Archives at St. Boniface, and "Arch. Arch. Edmonton" will refer to those at Edmonton.]

<sup>7</sup> Simonet, St. Laurent, July 20, 1868 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, December 15, 1868 (Arch. Arch.). Recensement de la population de la Rivière Blanche, 1868 (Arch. Arch.). Simonet, Ile de Tremble, June 25, 1868 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>9</sup> Mestre, St. Boniface, June 5, 1863 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>10</sup> Mgr. Taché, St. Boniface, July 16, 1865 (Arch. Arch.). André, St. Anne, January 3, 1867 (Arch. Arch.). and B 235 b/14, p. 723, W. Mactavish to the Committee, Fort Garry, August 22, 1866 (Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company). [In succeeding footnotes the abbreviation "Arch. H.B.C." will refer to the Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company.]

<sup>11</sup> Lacombe, St. Albert, March 10, 1864 (Arch. Arch.).



The events which followed the Insurrection magnified this exodus without modifying its characteristics. Just as in the past, two groups of migrants left the Red River and the outposts of the Assiniboine and Pembina Rivers. The first group moved toward the settlements which were slowly growing up around the missions of the West. A second, much larger group went to swell the ranks of the winter-rovers, who, lacking any particular ties, moved about according to whatever opportunities of subsistence they might come upon. Between these two groups there was in fact no sharp distinction.<sup>12</sup> For both groups, life was nomadic—for some it was continuously so, and for others merely interruptedly—with more or less prolonged sojourns in dwellings which were built either close to former missions or in the new settlements then being formed through the Prairies.

# 1. THE EXODUS TOWARD THE SETTLEMENTS OF THE PRAIRIES AND THE PARK LAND

The sites at which the Oblate Fathers had established missions in the Park Land and on the Prairies became natural points of concentration for the métis of the Red River. Some went to the mission at St. Albert, whose population in 1870 numbered 700.<sup>13</sup> Others joined those métis who, plagued with smallpox, had already left the St. Albert district to form a small settlement at Blackfoot Crossing.<sup>14</sup> Lake St. Anne and lac la Biche, whose combined population was between 500 and 800 according to Mgr. Grandin, also received an unspecified number of new arrivals.<sup>15</sup> About thirty families largely originating at St. François Xavier sought refuge in the mission of Father Decorby<sup>16</sup> near Lake Qu'Appelle, raising the number of families there to about fifty.<sup>17</sup> Some of these took over land plots, staked out boundaries and began to clear them.<sup>18</sup> The nucleus of a small settlement was established around Fort Ellice, not far from there, which was also composed essentially of emigrants who had originated from St. François Xavier or from its neighbouring village of Baie Saint-Paul.<sup>19</sup> Finally, a certain number of métis went to the shores of Lake Manitoba. These were divided between the two centres which together constituted the St. Laurent mission: Oak Point on the east bank, and the settlement of Bout du Lac on the south bank, where the Oblate Fathers were living.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>12</sup> J. S. Denis, Remarks on the condition of the half-breeds of the North-West Territories, Ottawa, December 20, 1878 (Macdonald Papers, Misc., 1878, p. 314).

<sup>13</sup> Mgr. Grandin, Fort Carlton, January 23, 1870 (Arch. Arch.). Leduc, St. Albert, January 4, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, February 25, 1892 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton). W. Pearce Manuscripts, Ch. 1 (Parliamentary Library, Edmonton).

<sup>14</sup> Pétition des habitants de Blackfoot Crossing à Sir John Macdonald, September 19, 1877 (D.I.F.).

<sup>15</sup> Notes intimes de Mgr. Grandin sur les missions de son diocèse (Lake St. Anne) (Arch. Arch.). Mgr. Grandin, Fort Carlton, January 23, 1870 (Arch. Arch.). W. Pearce Manuscripts, Ch. 1 (North-West Territories). Schedule of claimants who, subsequent to the 1st of May, 1886, have preferred claims to the half-breed and original white settlers' scrip . . . (D.I.F.).

<sup>16</sup> Pétition des habitants du lac Qu'Appelle à Sir John Macdonald, September 11, 1874 (D.I.F.). *Ibid.*, November 1883 (D.I.F.).

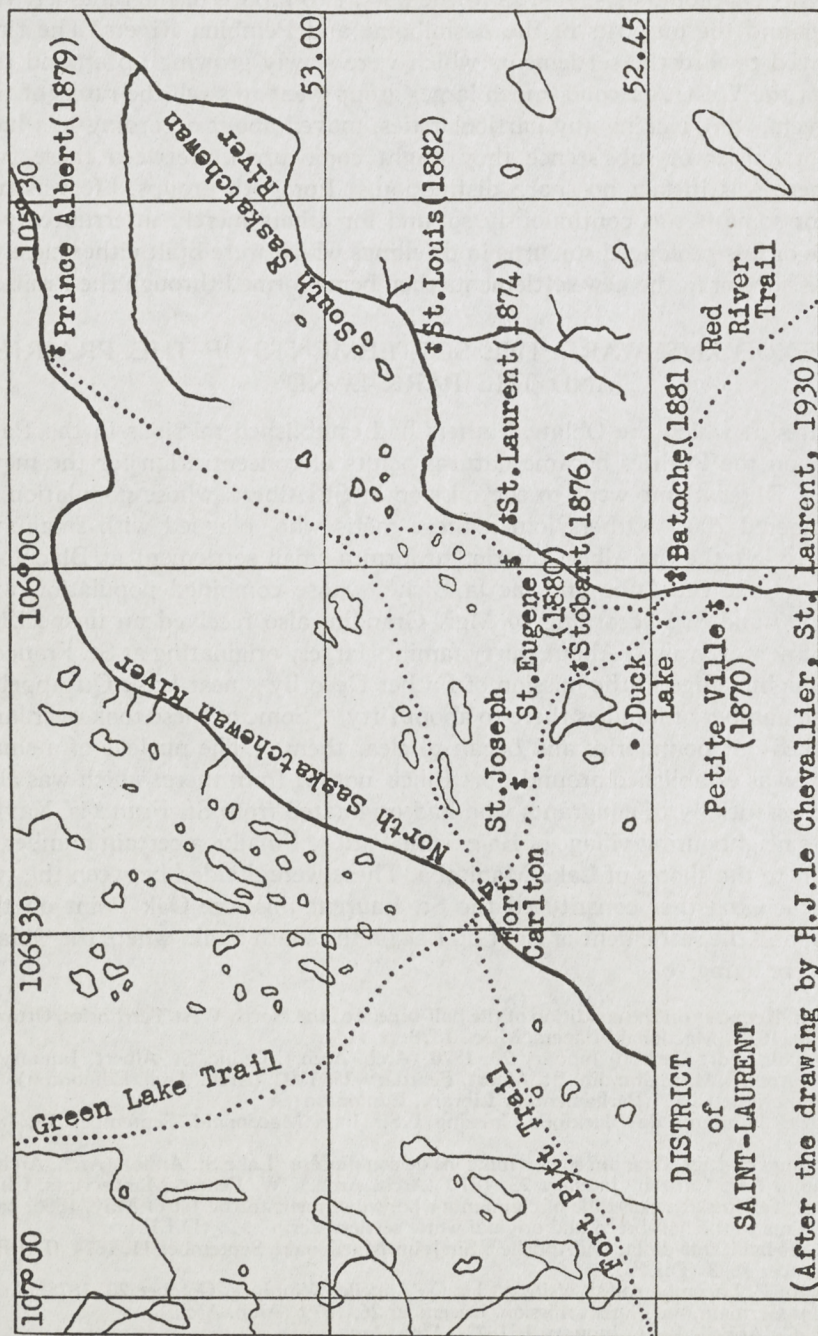
<sup>17</sup> Rapport du P. Lacombe sur sa visite au lac Qu'Appelle, Winnipeg, October 20, 1878 (Arch. Arch.). Saint-Germain, St. Florent mission, December 26, 1879 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>18</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>19</sup> Liste des familles de Fort Ellice (Arch. Arch., *passim*). Fort Ellice, November 7, 1882 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>20</sup> Camper, Recensement de la mission de St. Laurent, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Camper, St. Laurent, May 17, 1880 (Arch. Arch.). Report of a Committee of . . . the Privy Council . . . , May 21, 1887 (D.I.F.).





(From Giraud, M., Le Métis Canadien, p.1139.)



It was not long before new centres of métis population sprang up around sites which had already been visited for a long time, and these settlements were supplemented by the migration of other elements arriving from Red River and the Assiniboine River. One of these was the settlement which took birth along the lower course of the Qu'Appelle River near where it joins with the Assiniboine, and at the present site of the village of St. Lazare. Some twenty families from St. François Xavier came there about 1880, lured by the promises of new lands which Father Decorby made to them.<sup>21</sup> Another was the group which was formed in the same Qu'Appelle River valley, but up stream from the mission of the Oblate Fathers near Crooked Lake.<sup>22</sup> However, the most important settlements were organized near those points at which the winter-rovers had customarily gathered during their annual circuits. The richness of buffalo pastures and the existence of wooded stretches along the southern branch of the Saskatchewan had always attracted the hunters; here, many villages had been established which were usually occupied only temporarily, but which would occasionally be occupied through a period of several years and might even take on a certain appearance of permanence. In this manner a few dwellings were erected in 1860 near the bend of the river, at a point where it flows in a south-north direction [near present-day Duck Lake.] The maple tree and poplar which grow abundantly upon these banks furnished the necessary construction materials. For six years the same people continued to live there, dividing their time between hunting and trips to Fort Carlton and Winnipeg, where they traded furs and meat.<sup>23</sup> After 1870, many migrants from Manitoba came to these places of the hunters' preference. They in turn began to erect log dwellings, sometimes mingling them with the houses of the winter-rovers, and sometimes setting them up rather separately from the latter. Then, when missions had been established to minister to their spiritual needs, permanent villages were in fact constituted.

It was in such circumstances that the settlement of St. Laurent de Grandin was born. In 1870, at a short distance downstream from the bend in the river, about forty families which had emigrated from the Red River colony erected a village of winter-rovers, which they called *petite ville* ("Little Town", see map).<sup>24</sup> Some Western métis, including Gabriel Dumont, joined them.<sup>25</sup> Terrified by the smallpox epidemic which was then raging on the Prairies, the métis urgently sought the aid of a missionary. Father Moulin of the Ile à la Crosse mission came among them. A dwelling was quickly built for him and a chapel improvised, and Father Moulin spent the winter months in this new settlement, which fortunately was spared from the epidemic.<sup>26</sup> In the autumn of 1871, Father André came and established himself near the fifty families, which thereafter constituted the population of *petite ville*, and he undertook to set up the first civil register in which he recorded marriages and baptisms.<sup>27</sup> Since the little colony had decided to settle

<sup>21</sup> Hugonard, St. Florent, July 10, 1880 (Arch. Arch.). *Souvenirs de J. B. Houle et d'A. Boyer, St. Lazare.*

<sup>22</sup> Fort Ellice, November 7, 1882 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>23</sup> *Souvenirs écrits de P. Fleury* (Prince Albert Historical Society).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* and J. Le Chevallier, *Saint-Laurent de Grandin*, Vannes, 1930, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Notes de Mgr. Grandin (1864-1872)* (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1870-1* (Duck Lake Indian School).



down along the banks of the Saskatchewan, the missionary chose a site about ten miles downstream which he considered propitious for the establishment of a permanent village and a mission.<sup>28</sup> However, the proposal was not realized until 1874. Despite their previous decision, the métis did not take enthusiastically to the idea of conforming to an existence in which the cultivation of the soil would play a role of greater importance. They persisted in their habitual activities to the spring of 1874, living exclusively from hunting and trading.<sup>29</sup> Then they abandoned their first locale, and, on the sandy plateau where a church and living quarters were already being established by the missionaries, they set about to erect in random arrangement their traditional log huts, around which they broke and pastured their first plots of land.<sup>30</sup> In the beginning progress was slow, impeded by the mediocrity of the soil, the vagaries of the climate and the "indifference" and "instability" of the métis.<sup>31</sup> Some improvement, however, was recorded in 1876 by Father André, who spoke of "real colonists" enlarging the size of their fields in spite of the extreme drouth of the summer, and undertaking the cultivation of barley in addition to wheat and potatoes.<sup>32</sup> The arrival of new emigrants from the Red River in 1877, together with the favorable climatic conditions of that year, made a certain breadth of agricultural activities possible.<sup>33</sup> Gradually the colony of St. Laurent de Grandin entered a period of less precarious existence. In 1879, high returns from their harvest were a good remuneration for the efforts of the most industrious of the métis. The arrival of a teacher two years later made it possible to organize a school and to continue a project which had at first failed.<sup>34</sup> Then, by 1882, many families from Manitoba had reached the banks of the Saskatchewan, and, on the other hand, several nomads had given up their wandering and were converted to a more sedentary way of life.<sup>35</sup> The settlement thus underwent a significant development which made it possible not only to consolidate the position of St. Laurent, but also to bring together near the more recent missions the people who had previously been dispersed through the outlying districts.

A settlement was similarly founded at Duck Lake in 1876, where families originally from the Red River grouped themselves around a nucleus of Western métis.<sup>36</sup> Then, in 1881, a mission was started on a separate site, at which several families of winter-rovers had already established themselves—probably about 1870—at the point where the Red River trail crossed the South Saskatchewan (the "Batoche ferry" or *traverse à Batoche* as the métis termed it).<sup>37</sup> Under the

<sup>28</sup> J. Le Chevallier, *op. cit.* pp. 20 *et seq.*

<sup>29</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1870-1 (Duck Lake Indian School).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1875. Lestanc, Fort Carlton, September 16, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>31</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1875 (Duck Lake.)

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1876.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1877.

<sup>34</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1877, 1878-81 (Duck Lake.)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1882-3 (Duck Lake). André, St. Laurent de Grandin, January 16, 1883 (Arch. Arch.). Pétition des habitants de St. Antoine de Padoue à Sir John Macdonald (September 4, 1882) (D.I.F.). Numbers of claimants in Saint-Laurent and vicinity who commenced residence of land in 1872, 1873, etc. . . (Macdonald Papers, Prior to Outbreak, 1885, 2nd Vol. p. 515).

<sup>36</sup> J. Le Chevallier, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40. Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1877, 1880, 1882 (Duck Lake Indian School).

<sup>37</sup> Souvenirs écrits de P. Fleury (Prince Albert Historical Society). Capt. R. Deacon, Early Days in Prince Albert (Prince Albert Historical Society).



patronage of Saint Antoine de Padoue, it grew more slowly than the mission at St. Laurent (11 families in 1881). But by 1882, it too had profited by the arrival of métis from the Red River, for several families originally from St. Norbert had come and settled there.<sup>38</sup> Again, further down toward the junction of the two branches of the Saskatchewan, below St. Laurent, a small métis colony, which had been established about 1873,<sup>39</sup> became in turn the site of a mission in 1882.<sup>40</sup> Thereafter, it had a population of some thirty families,<sup>41</sup> which was likewise composed of a small number of Western métis together with a majority of emigrants from the Red River. A total of sixty or seventy métis families dotted the South Saskatchewan at this point, most of them originating in Manitoba.<sup>42</sup> On the two banks of the river, which were linked together near St. Antoine de Padoue by a barge established by one of the first inhabitants,<sup>43</sup> métis from the Red and Assiniboine Rivers were once again solidly entrenched in a series of settlements which for the most part were scarcely more than a larger reproduction of former villages of winter-rovers.

The métis did not restrict themselves entirely to a sedentary existence in these new settlements. If the Manitoba métis were more accustomed to working on the land than were their Western brothers, and if they contributed more actively to improving the land, they nonetheless returned, in these Western plains, to the same nomadic activities which were no longer possible in Manitoba. At least this was true of the first emigrants. Having set out in the hope of again taking up their preferred way of life, they found herds in the Western plains which were still numerous enough to satisfy their passion for hunting. Thus, the settlements which were established in the Prairies, whether they were mingled with villages of winter-rovers or were family groups concentrated around the missions, became the starting points for frequent hunting expeditions in which the whole population participated. At the mission at Lake Qu'Appelle, for example, only about thirty families remained for the winter. Frequent excursions through the Prairies would be made in order to procure buffalo meat, which constituted their customary food, supplemented by lake fish and such garden produce as potatoes and cabbages.<sup>44</sup> Often the men were absent for many weeks, pushing their hunting expeditions all the way to the South Saskatchewan.<sup>45</sup> Or again, with their whole families, they would break up into mobile winter camps, often moving to great distances and not returning until the springtime.<sup>46</sup> Then, during the

<sup>38</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1882 (Duck Lake). Codex Historicus de la mission Saint-Antoine de Padoue (Batoche). Pétition de habitants de Saint-Antoine de Padoue, September 4, 1882 (D.I.F.).

<sup>39</sup> Pétition des habitants de Saint-Louis de Langevin, November 19, 1883 (D.I.F.).

<sup>40</sup> J. Le Chevallier, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1882, 1883, (Duck Lake), Schmidt, St. Laurent de Grandin, September 11, 1880.

<sup>41</sup> Pétition des habitants de Saint-Louis de Langevin, November 19, 1883 (D.I.F.).

<sup>42</sup> Moulin, St. Antoine de Padoue, July 14, 1883 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>43</sup> Xavier Letendre, called Batoche, whose name was given to the settlement that was placed under the patronage of Saint Antoine de Padoue. The price of the crossing was 25 cents per cart. The service provided by the French-Canadian Batoche was the only one in existence on the waterways of the Prairies. Everywhere else, the carts crossed rivers by other means (described in *Le Métis Canadien*, pp. 982-3).

<sup>44</sup> Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>45</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, February 12, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>46</sup> Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).



summer, after a few weeks had been devoted to agricultural work at the mission, the hunt was begun once more. If buffalo were not too far away, the entire population would desert Lake Qu'Appelle;<sup>47</sup> on other occasions, the families would stay behind in large numbers at the mission,<sup>48</sup> the men alone participating in the hunt.<sup>49</sup> Yet, in the last analysis, hunting remained the primary occupation of the population, the basis of its economy and the essential principle of its existence.<sup>50</sup> Also, fishing for pike and whitefish, which was carried on during the winter under the lake ice, provided a supplementary resource of some significance.<sup>51</sup> This formula of life, rather more nomadic than sedentary,<sup>52</sup> made little provision for work in the fields.<sup>53</sup> It might have portended a new wave of destruction when White settlement, resuming its inexorable offensive toward the West, would again extend beyond the small plots which the métis had set out according to their capricious habits and the whim of each individual, beside the lakes in the Qu'Appelle River valley.<sup>54</sup>

Existence was scarcely any different in the other settlements. Everywhere it complied with the dominant pre-occupation of nomadism and relegated agriculture to the rank of a secondary activity. At St. Albert, as at Red River, the population undertook collective hunting expeditions in summer and autumn.<sup>55</sup> In addition, agricultural work was subject to frequent interruptions, dependent upon the uncertainties of climate, and thus rendering nomadism a necessity.<sup>56</sup> The smallpox epidemic which was raging in 1870 made these vagabond customs even more pronounced; at that time, many believed that they could escape the scourge by fleeing to the Prairies.<sup>57</sup> A famine which came close on the heels of the epidemic forced many families to seek their subsistence in buffalo hunting, and so this practice continued during the years which followed.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the custom of winter-wandering became generalized, inducing at least half the population to move out of the colony in 1874.<sup>59</sup> Again in 1876, the missionaries could deplore the fact that many families were leaving for good.<sup>60</sup> Naturally, agriculture suffered from this abandonment.<sup>61</sup> The population of lac la Biche and Lake St. Anne also lived from fishing and hunting more than from agriculture.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Hugonard, Rapport sur l'école du lac Qu'Appelle, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). Lestanc, St. Florent, July 28, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, St. Florent, August 11, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>48</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, April 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, September 15, 1875 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>49</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>50</sup> Decorby, St. Florent, December 2, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Qu'Appelle Lake, February 10, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>52</sup> Pétition des métis du lac Qu'Appelle, September 11, 1874 (D.I.F.).

<sup>53</sup> Hugonard, St. Florent, January 19, 1883, (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>54</sup> Hugonard au Ministre de l'Intérieur, October 1, 1874 (Macdonald Papers, Prior to Outbreak, 2nd Vol.).

<sup>55</sup> Leduc, St. Albert, January 4, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>56</sup> Lestanc, St. Albert, July 31, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>57</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, February 25, 1892 (Arch. Arch. Edmonton).

<sup>58</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, October 13, 1870 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, January 7, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Leduc, St. Albert, February 23, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Pétition des métis de Blackfoot Crossing, September 19, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>59</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, March 26, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, December 29, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>60</sup> Sister (?), St. Albert, January 9, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>61</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, November 16, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>62</sup> Anon., Lac la Biche, December 7, 1874 (Arch. Arch.). Grouard, St. Albert, January 12, 1881 (Arch. Arch.).



The same was true of the St. Laurent mission at Lake Manitoba.<sup>63</sup> Finally, the population of the South Saskatchewan, which had known no activity other than hunting in the first place, did not give up the custom of "taking to the wide open spaces" until circumstances rendered this necessary. In summer, the hunters would go away in groups under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont. Again in the autumn, they would organize a new expedition, the fruits of which allowed them to spend a peaceful winter in the settlement at St. Laurent, interrupted only by somewhat more limited excursions into that "baneful prairie" which Father André was urging them to give up.<sup>64</sup> Despite the gradual development of agricultural work and the increased stability of the mission, the custom of collective hunting expeditions by no means disappeared during the years which followed, any more than did the practice of short winter expeditions, which made possible the re-stocking of fresh meat supplies.<sup>65</sup>

The métis traditions of life, uprooted in Manitoba by the development of a new economy, were thus pursued in the Western expanses, which had become a refuge for a large part of the population of Assiniboia. The persistence of nomadism was singularly obstructive to the work of the missionaries. It not only thwarted the progress of settlement, but maintained primitive customs which neutralized the moral education of the clergy. As it had been in the past, contact with indigenous peoples perpetuated the use of primitive languages in these families,<sup>66</sup> and led them away from the idea of "work and economy" and from that "love of learning" which the missionaries incessantly preached to them.<sup>67</sup>

Not to be discouraged, the missionaries organized schools as soon as possible. In order to combat the passion for nomadism, they occasionally refused to admit children whom the parents persisted in taking away periodically into the Prairies.<sup>68</sup> At the same time they strove to banish the disorders which this wandering life entailed. They worked above all against the vice of drunkenness. This was an especially difficult task, because while it might be possible to superimpose a better-regulated life upon these métis communities—at least, inasmuch as they were grouped around a determinate centre under the strict watch of the missionaries<sup>69</sup>—it was still necessary to deal with the influence of the Whites who were then beginning to move into the Western plains, where they peddled alcohol freely. At St. Albert, as early as 1872, Mgr. Grandin observed the rapid ill-effects of White contact on this population, which was "without energy" and doomed to an even greater decadence than that of the Red River.<sup>70</sup> Before long the same

<sup>63</sup> Camper, St. Laurent, August 10, 1871. Proulx, Lake Manitoba, August 15, 1871. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1872. Camper, Lake Manitoba, May 14, 1872. *Ibid.* August 25, 1872. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1872. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1874. (All of these from Arch. Arch.).

<sup>64</sup> Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1875 (Duck Lake).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1876, 1877, 1878. Also Moulin, Lac Vert, January 18, 1878 (Arch. Arch.). André, Fort Carlton, August 12, and October 9, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>66</sup> Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, July 14, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>67</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, November 16, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1875 (Arch. Arch.). Leduc, St. Albert, January 4, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). Fourmond, St. Laurent de Grandin, July 30, 1883 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>69</sup> Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). J. Le Chevallier, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>70</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, August 27, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Fort McLeod, July 6, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, November 6, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, December 26, 1872, (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, October 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Leduc, St. Albert, December 20, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).



danger was threatening the settlements of the South Saskatchewan. "They're beginning to import liquor now," wrote Father Moulin at St. Antoine de Padoue, "and this will by the ruination of our poor métis".<sup>71</sup>

Yet, the activities of the missionaries were not without effect. Their admonitions in favour of a more sedentary existence softened the obstinacy of a certain number of families. As a result, part of the population of Lake Qu'Appelle agreed, without giving up their expeditions into the Prairies, to devote themselves to working the land and to building fences around their cultivated lands,<sup>72</sup> as a protection against an imminent invasion by the Whites. It was due to their efforts, too, that agriculture received its first impetus among the missions of the Saskatchewan, and the winter-rovers agreed to come back to the villages to look after seeding.<sup>73</sup> Despite the reluctance of many to share in the expenses which would be entailed,<sup>74</sup> the schools were at last able to bring together from thirty to fifty pupils each, varying according to locality and distance of the families. The children would thus receive some elementary instruction,<sup>75</sup> and come more directly under the influence of their pastors.<sup>76</sup> In order to prepare the métis for the advent of regular institutions, to break them away from the hold of nomadism and to end the dissensions which weakened them, the missionaries endeavoured—and not without success—to communicate to them more rigorous habits of discipline, much beyond the framework of elementary government which was then known on the Prairies. In 1874, for instance, we see the métis of Lake Qu'Appelle petitioning the Lieutenant-Governor for the establishment of a government capable of giving them laws and arbitrating disputes.<sup>77</sup> As early as 1870, at the instigation of Mgr. Grandin, the métis of St. Albert were asking for the appointment of a magistrate.<sup>78</sup> Again in 1873, at St. Laurent, at a time when the population still lived according to its custom of winter-roving, Father André presided over the organization of a provisional government to be charged with "judging legal disputes as well as questions concerning the general welfare".<sup>79</sup> A leader was designated in the person of Gabriel Dumont, assisted by eight councillors, all of them, including the "president", to be elected for one-year terms. In the presence of the missionary, an oath was taken on the Bible, first by the members of the government, to fulfil their obligations, and then by the people, to "support them [the government] in the execution of their duties". A police force, which consisted of captains and soldiers, in the same way as the hunting camps had done, was put in charge of the enforcement of the council's laws, and the execution of

<sup>71</sup> Moulin, St. Antoine de Padoue, July 14, 1883 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>72</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, April 1, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Lacombe, Winnipeg, October 20, 1878 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>73</sup> Hugonard, St. Florent, Easter 1875 (?) (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>74</sup> Fourmond, St. Laurent de Grandin, July 30, 1883 (Arch. Arch.). Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1877 (Duck Lake Indian School).

<sup>75</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, December 29, 1874 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, September 15, 1875 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, January 20, 1875 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>76</sup> Leduc, St. Albert, January 4, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>77</sup> Decorby, Qu'Appelle Lake, September 21, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>78</sup> Mgr. Grandin, Fort Carlton, January 23, 1870 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>79</sup> André, Assemblée publique tenue le 10 décembre 1873 dans l'hivernement des métis établis sur la Saskatchewan (P.A.C.). Memorandum of John McKay of Prince Albert, 1874 (Macdonald Papers, Prior to outbreak, 1st Vol., p. 130).



sentences which were handed down once a month when the council sat as a tribunal. A body of legislation was then elaborated. It regulated the size and shape of land plots, provided various penalties relating to acts against public order, established penalties to forestall prairie fires, and regulated ferry service on the river, relationships between master and servant and even Sunday labour.<sup>80</sup> This was the régime prevailing in the small community when it was moved to the site of the St. Laurent mission. In 1874, new legislation was instituted to regulate property law, and to confer to the inhabitants the right of common exploitation on "wooded lands unsuitable for cultivation". In 1875, legislative provision was made for the building of a school and the organization of collective hunts.<sup>81</sup> Such were the regulations which the missionary inspired directly in the métis, and which put an end, temporarily at least, to those frequent dissensions among the elements to whom the obligations of collective discipline were strange, and who were "so often divided in their hunting councils".<sup>82</sup> As population grew the missionary would carry out more and more varied kinds of work, broadening and extending that rôle on the Western plains which he had never ceased to play.

Finally, the missionaries often joined hunting groups that travelled about over the Prairie, in order to attack more directly the disorders which were spreading among the métis and favouring the advance of nomadism. This was the only means of exercising any effective control over the inhabitants who escaped the clergy's watchful eye during those periods of great hunting expeditions. It was also the only means of establishing contact with the métis who scattered over the plains from camp to camp without ever becoming attached anywhere, and whose numbers never ceased to grow with the arrival of emigrants from the Red River.<sup>83</sup>

## 2. THE NOMADIC GROUPS

During the years which followed the Red River Insurrection, the Western plains were invaded by ever-increasing numbers of winter-rovers, who led an entirely nomadic life and were ignorant of the custom of temporary settlement in a fixed location—a custom characteristic of the group which has been described in the preceding section. These winter-rovers (*hiernants*) could move around during all seasons, and not merely in the winter months as their name might appear to suggest. There figured among these *hiernants* several groups: métis who had definitely abandoned the Red River with a desire to devote themselves exclusively to the hunting life; Western métis who had never known any other existence; a few elements who had become detached from the settlements of the Prairies or the Park Land and returned there less and less often and for increasingly short visits; and finally, the true *hiernants*, who periodically would follow their old custom of cold weather peregrinations away from the Red River or the Assiniboine. The Prairie attracted more and more of the métis from the Red River, not only because it could still offer them the possibility of indulging in their favoured customs far from a country which was overthrowing their concepts, but

<sup>80</sup> André, Assemblée publique tenue le 10 décembre, 1873, *op. cit.*

<sup>81</sup> André, Assemblée publique tenue à l'hivernement des métis, February 10, 1874 (P.A.C.). also *ibid.*, January 27, 1875 (P.A.C.)

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, January 27, 1875, Remarques du P. André, (P.A.C.). Chronicle of St. Laurent, 1878, 1881 (Duck Lake Indian School).

<sup>83</sup> Decorby, St. Florent, August 11, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).



also because it assured them an important source of profit because of the increasing demand for buffalo hides. Therefore, the nomadic population continued to grow. "The ever-increasing flow of hunters still holds strong," wrote Father Decorby in 1872.<sup>84</sup> In the Qu'Appelle River area, in 1878, there were thought to be some 300 families permanently moving around on the Prairies, content to appear at the mission only when chance took them there.<sup>85</sup> Often their absence would be prolonged for as long as several years at a time,<sup>86</sup> as it had been with those families of free men who, in by-gone days, would shun the trading posts indefinitely. Like them, the winter-rovers would bury their dead on the Prairies, and now and then would take them to the cemetery of the mission. Baptisms and deaths were not generally recorded, so that when federal agents undertook to establish the exact size of the population of the North-West at the time of the annexation of the Territories by the Dominion, they found themselves confronted with an impossible situation.<sup>87</sup>

The movements of this nomadic population, which were dependent upon buffalo migrations, were themselves very irregular. The hill ranges and the rivers flowing through the buffalo pasture regions were naturally the places that were customarily frequented. Wood Mountain could still induce winter-rovers to make the six-day journey from the Pembina area or from the settlement at St. Joseph, and when the hunters went there, the settlers would take advantage of their absence by occupying their lands or pillaging their houses. The missionaries here found groups of 100 and 150 families,<sup>88</sup> and there were also families from St. François Xavier or from the Qu'Appelle River among them.<sup>89</sup> Wood Mountain was sufficiently extensive and rich enough in natural shelters to make it possible for the population often to move the villages which it used to establish for the duration of the winter.<sup>90</sup> In those parts, the herds were large enough in the cold season for men to return from their excursions through the Prairies well laden with hides and meat.<sup>91</sup> But the changes of climate were frequent and the migrations uncertain, and consequently, great distress might be visited upon these winter-rovers.<sup>92</sup> Then, Wood Mountain would become "depopulated",<sup>93</sup> and the métis would move along to other places which winter-rovers customarily visited. At Porcupine River, for example, families from St. Joseph or St. François Xavier<sup>94</sup> used to assemble together. The banks of the White Mud River were especially attractive to a large number of hunters, and the villages which were

<sup>84</sup> St. Florent, August 11, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>85</sup> Rapport du P. Lacombe sur sa visite au lac Qu'Appelle, Winnipeg, October 20, 1878 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>86</sup> Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 12, 1882 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>87</sup> N. O. Cote (?), Ottawa, n.d. (D.I.F.).

<sup>88</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Simonet, Pembina, September 16, 1873 (Arch. Arch.). Le Floch, St. Joseph, April 24, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Lestanc, White Mud River, November 13, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Pétition des métis de la Montagne des Bois à Mgr. Taché, April 20, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>89</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, White Mud River, November 13, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, Wood Mountain, January 15, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, and *ibid.*, May 3, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, Wood Mountain, February 17, 1879 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* and Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.) Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, White Mud River, November 14, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).



built there could well rival those of Wood Mountain.<sup>95</sup> Sometimes, the métis knew periods of extraordinary abundance there. Hides would pile up in their encampments, assuring profits with which the métis increased the number of their horses.<sup>96</sup> Many of them went there, both from the Red River, from Lake Manitoba and from Lake Qu'Appelle.<sup>97</sup> The winter-rovers from Lake Qu'Appelle also went all the way to *Fourche des Gros Ventres* (the South Saskatchewan River), where they met other nomadic groups as well as the winter-rovers from St. Laurent de Grandin.<sup>98</sup> From there, they could easily make it to the Cypress Hills, which again were one of the preferred sites of the buffalo herds.<sup>99</sup> In that region, American traders had established trading posts where they assembled substantial stocks of buffalo hides.<sup>100</sup> Everywhere, winter-rovers were attracted by these wooded, undulating lands which dominated the horizons of the Prairies (like the Touchwood Hills<sup>101</sup> and Boss Hill<sup>102</sup>) because of the resources which they offered, and in spite of the uncertainty created by vagaries of climate.

The wooded banks of streams and lakes played a similar role, as in the case of the Red Deer River,<sup>103</sup> flowing into the South Saskatchewan,<sup>104</sup> the Battle River,<sup>105</sup> and lac des Boeufs, where more than 250 families spent the winter of 1875-6,<sup>106</sup> and where the métis of St. Albert went.<sup>107</sup> This was especially true of the South Saskatchewan, whose pastures supported many encampments which were often spread out to great distances beyond its banks.<sup>108</sup> Frequently groups would gather together in the *coulées* of the Moose Jaw, not far from the Qu'Appelle River.<sup>109</sup>

The nomads were often obliged to move between these different points. Their wanderings, which were contingent upon those of the animals, would take them to hill after hill, from Wood Mountain to the Cypress Hills,<sup>110</sup> and even as far as the approaches to the Rocky Mountains.<sup>111</sup> Sometimes they would scatter at random when buffalo were scarce,<sup>112</sup> dividing themselves into very small groups

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, White Mud River, November 14, 1873 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Wood Mountain, January 15, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, December 26, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>96</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, February 25, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>97</sup> Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, December 26, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, St. Florent, October 6, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Qu'Appelle Lake, February 12, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Lestanc, Wood Mountain, January 15, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>100</sup> Le Floch, St. Joseph, December 22, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>101</sup> Mgr. Grandin, Touchwood Hills, May 18, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.). Saint-Germain, St. Florent, December 26, 1879 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>102</sup> Decorby, Fort Ellice, August 22, 1880 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*,

May 1, 1881 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>103</sup> Rapport de Jean L'Heureux, Fort McLeod, November 1, 1886 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. p. 126).

<sup>104</sup> Lestanc, la Biche River, December 28, 1878 (Arch. Arch.). Leduc, April 1, 1879 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>105</sup> Mgr. Grandin, Rapid River, June 29, 1870 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, St. Albert, January 12, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Chronicle of St. Laurent de Grandin, 1875 (Duck Lake Indian School).

<sup>107</sup> Lestanc, St. Albert, December 30, 1874 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, April 10, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>108</sup> Moulin, Fourche des Gros Ventres, January 25, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Round Prairie, December 30, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>109</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, November 13, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, St. Florent, December 2, 1873 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>110</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, April 25, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Benton, May 22, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, March 26, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.).



in much the same manner as the Forest Indian Tribes. By chance, a snowfall might come upon them in the Prairies before they had reached their destination; it then became necessary to improvise a temporary village and make the best of whatever resources the particular area might yield.<sup>113</sup> In this way, families of winter-rovers would be strewn over the vast prairie, and even to the edge of the Park Land.<sup>114</sup> This process of scattering was equally apparent even in areas which were not a buffalo habitat, such as the shores of Lake Manitoba. Here, the quest of sites that would be propitious for fishing or the hunting of fur-bearing animals was paramount.<sup>115</sup> During summer, the groups scattered through the Prairies would generally re-unite in larger bands to take up the common pursuit of buffalo herds,<sup>116</sup> but they compared neither in numbers nor in degree of organization with the Red River hunting expeditions. Groups of varying size roamed about over the Prairies, some of them consisting strictly of nomadic elements, and others being made up of métis from the different missions who hit for the open spaces as soon as winter was over. There existed no organization except when the group was large enough to justify the establishment of a Prairie Council<sup>117</sup> or the elaboration of precise rules, as in the case of the métis from St. Laurent. Then, the winter-rovers would break up once again for the duration of the cold season.<sup>118</sup> Some went back to the missions, and others spread out toward the customary centres of winter camping. Throughout this general population dispersion, the existence of certain special sites constituted the only principle of relative unity. It was the Cypress Hills,<sup>119</sup> Wood Mountain,<sup>120</sup> and, more and more as the years passed by and the herds thinned out, the banks of the Milk River "beyond the line" in American territory, that the buffalo visited in greatest numbers. In this latter area the métis had organized a government similar to that of St. Laurent.<sup>121</sup> In addition, they hoped to obtain generous concessions from the American Government at a time when the North-West Council was endeavouring to regulate the freedom of hunting on Dominion territory.<sup>122</sup> As in the past, traders set themselves up in the camps of winter-rovers, taking up their customary business of exchange with the métis, in which buffalo hides were

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, January 20, 1875 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>114</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, August 12, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). (The latter estimates the number of families expected to spend the winter in the area up to the Saskatchewan at four hundred.) Also, *ibid.*, January 13, 1877, (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>115</sup> Simonet, St. Laurent, Manitoba, April 1, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, October 22, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, April 18, 1881 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.* May 23, 1870 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>116</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, January 15, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, St. Florent, July 28, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, St. Florent, August 11, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Lestanc, White Mud River, May 4, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>117</sup> Chronicle of the Lake St. Anne Mission, 1871.

<sup>118</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, November 13, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). G. M. Dawson, *Report on the Geology and Resources of the Region in the Vicinity of the 49th Parallel*, Montreal, 1875, pp. 295-6.

<sup>119</sup> Decorby, Fort Pelly, January 22, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, May 20, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, September 29, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>120</sup> Decorby, Wood Mountain, February 17, 1879 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, St. Florent, May 20, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, January 13, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, St. Florent, September 14, 1878 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, Qu'Appelle Lake, September 29, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, Cypress Hills, December 12, 1877 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, Qu'Appelle Lake, February 9, 1878 (Arch. Arch.). Jean L'Heureux, Fort McLeod, November 1, 1886 (Macdonald Papers, 1885, 7th Vol. p. 126).



now playing the essential role, while alcohol became the most extensive item of barter.<sup>123</sup>

Nothing could have worked more against the activities of the missionaries than this way of life. To be sure, the métis who had an attachment in some settlement were able to escape periodically from the undermining influences of primitive life. But for the nomadic groups, everything contributed to reinforcing those influences and giving rise to serious social disorders; the absolute freedom of existence and the constant association with the Indian;<sup>124</sup> the dissemination of alcoholic beverages (of which the métis themselves were the instruments);<sup>125</sup> and, finally, the social milieu composed of Western métis and exiles from the Red River who came into the Prairies in search of an ideal of life that was far removed from the concepts of the Church. These evils were extended so much the more quickly because the abolition of the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly had eliminated every obstacle to free competition among the traders, and to the distribution of alcoholic beverages. The American trading posts dotting the Montana border sold such beverages widely among the Indians and métis of the Prairies.<sup>126</sup> Struck by the sight of the resulting disorders, the missionaries sought to bring all the rival groups together into a single band which would be subject to specific obligations. In other words, they prescribed a return to the form of government of former years as the only means of avoiding ruin among the indigenous peoples.<sup>127</sup> Among every group of winter-rovers there travelled rum vendors, themselves recruited largely from among the métis.<sup>128</sup> Brawls would break out among the Indians and métis. Stealing and pillaging were multiplied.<sup>129</sup> All moral restraint was vanishing among the winter-rovers, who had no scruples about prostituting their daughters to the liquor traders;<sup>130</sup> they were therefore experiencing the same moral breakdown as the Indians who had made contact with the Whites.<sup>131</sup> Many of them gave up all their possessions in order to make liquor purchases.<sup>132</sup> No group belonging to any particular mission was spared this corruption. The métis of Lake St. Anne, for example, would, when on the Prairies, succumb to the same criminal excesses as Indians who were under the influence of alcohol.<sup>133</sup> Those groups alone which were kept under the immediate watch of a missionary could escape this debasement, and the missionaries were not able to reach all of the encampments that were scattered throughout the Prairies. Often obliged to share their activities among several groups of métis, the missionaries reduced their visits to very short stays, and disorders would

<sup>123</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, April 6, 1874 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, Fort Pelly, January 22, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>124</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, April 6, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>126</sup> Lacombe, St. Albert, April 4, 1871 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>127</sup> Mgr. Grandin, St. Albert, December 23, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, December 29, 1875 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>128</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, May 3, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Légeard, Ile à la Crosse, January 9, 1875 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>129</sup> Le Floch, St. Joseph, December 22, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). Camper, St. Laurent, Manitoba, October 18, 1878 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>130</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, November 13, 1872 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>131</sup> Moulin, Round Prairie, December 30, 1873 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Chronicle of Lake St. Anne, 1871.



begin all over again immediately after they had left.<sup>134</sup> Even in the most important settlements like Wood Mountain and the Cypress Hills, where they were able to make regular and prolonged visits,<sup>135</sup> they could not contact all of the winter-rovers. Many families isolated themselves in *coulées* which were difficult of access, where the missionary could not reach them, and where they did not mix with anyone except the Indian or the liquor trader.<sup>136</sup> Their contacts with civilizing influences became less and less as their visits to the mission were limited to but a few days every year.<sup>137</sup> The admonitions of their pastors remained without effect on this element. In them, the teachings of Christianity were disappearing in growing indifference and amorality.<sup>138</sup> In many cases, the missionaries considered useless all attempts at straightening them out,<sup>139</sup> and saw no remedy except in the energetic intervention of the state, to which they denounced the evil effects of alcoholic beverages.<sup>140</sup> Here and there, they managed to keep the odd child away from the demoralizing influences of the environment in which it lived,<sup>141</sup> but this was certainly a meagre gain which had no repercussion upon the group as a whole.

This nomadic existence, which all of them carried on to different degrees, was not only a factor of moral regression for the Western métis and their brothers from the Red River. It condemned them also to that economic regression which bound them to their past, and which, in the very near future, was to keep them from effecting any adaptation to the concepts which were already dominant in the Province of Manitoba. Even before this brief period of time was spent, their formula of life would expose them to a state of misery which was to be the first stage of their material downfall. The reason for this was the rapid extermination of the buffalo herds in the course of the ten years which followed the Red River Insurrection.

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<sup>134</sup> Lestanc, Wood Mountain, March 21, 1871 (Arch. Arch.). Simonet, St. Laurent, Manitoba, April 1, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>135</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, April 6, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>136</sup> Simonet, St. Laurent, Manitoba, April 1, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, Fort Pelly, January 22, 1876 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Cypress Hills, December 12, 1877 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, St. Florent, December 2, 1873 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, Moose Jaw, February 5, 1874 (Arch. Arch.). Hugonard, St. Florent, n.d. (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>138</sup> Decorby, St. Florent, August 11, 1872 (Arch. Arch.). *Ibid.*, December 2, 1873 (Arch. Arch.). Légeard, Ile à la Crosse, January 9, 1875 (Arch. Arch.). Decorby, Fort Pelly, January 22, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>139</sup> Lacombe, Winnipeg, June 18, 1878 (Arch. Arch.). Kavanagh, St. François Xavier, February 23, 1875 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>140</sup> Decorby, Fort Pelly, January 22, 1876 (Arch. Arch.).

<sup>141</sup> Lestanc, White Mud River, April 15, 1874 (Arch. Arch.).



## *Song of the North-West*

I've heard, and I may state—  
 I think it suits our case—  
 This world would be a gloomy one  
 If hope were not its base.  
 It shows itself quite plain round here,  
 And clings close as a leech.  
 To see our faces brighten up  
 Just make this little speech:  
     Wait for the railroad  
     Wait for the railroad!  
     Wait for the railroad!  
     And we'll all take a ride!

'Tis true the winters they are long,  
 The frost is very keen,  
 And snow in smaller quantities  
 May very oft be seen;  
 But deeper snow and harder frost  
 Will disappear in spring;  
 And our winters don't seem very long  
 When now and then we sing—  
     Wait for the railroad, etc.

Mosquitoes in the summer time  
 Are thick, and that is true;  
 They, with the "bull-dogs," go for blood,  
 (They've nothing else to do);  
 But the Ontarians all tell us—  
 And maybe 'tis a fact—  
 When once the railroad comes this way  
 The flies will clear the track.  
     So we'll wait for the railroad, etc.

The summer frosts, we've got them too,  
 But we'll soon have their cure,  
 For settlement will cook their goose,  
 And that is coming sure.  
 Society is not the best,  
 But then we all believe,  
 Improved it will be very much  
 When once the 'squitos leave.  
     So wait for the railroad, etc.

This pemican is not the thing  
 Day after day to eat;  
 But even that is better far  
 Than doing without meat.  
 Some people here do tell us  
 To live here is in vain,  
 Till we get whiskey in the land  
 To ease us of our pain.  
     So wait for the railroad, etc.

One word now in conclusion,  
 The poet was not wrong,  
 For truth is found in every word  
 That finishes my song.  
 He says that "hope eternal springs  
 Within the human breast;"  
 He also says, "Man never is,  
 But always to be blest."  
 But we'll wait for the railroad!  
     Wait for the railroad!  
     Wait for the railroad!  
     If we never get a ride!

—D.R.



## Folklore In Saskatchewan

During the past three years the Saskatchewan Archives Office has prepared and circulated a number of questionnaires dealing with various aspects of individual experience and community activity during pioneer days. So far these questionnaires have not touched on that broad and somewhat elusive subject of popular thought and feeling—including the traditions and lore which are the common possession of many among us. As a first venture in this field, a questionnaire on Saskatchewan folklore is being prepared which will be circulated this winter. The following brief article is presented at this time in the hope that it will stimulate our readers to recall some of those oft told tales and anecdotes which form the folklore of various groups and communities in the province. The preservation of this material through the medium of the questionnaires will, we believe, provide a useful body of material for the social historian and novelist. A summary report on this folklore questionnaire will be presented in a future issue of *Saskatchewan History*.

THE EDITOR

FOLKLORE always seemed to me a pleasantly vague category in which to place data of dubious historical authenticity and by whose criteria to explain ethnological traits of apparently inexplicable origin. Its prestige lent dignity to the untidy miscellany of detail which accompanied the unrecorded beginnings of any region and which otherwise might be dismissed as superstition or fantasy. Why, for example, did an Alsatian spit on his hands before a fight? Folklore could tell you. When I used to see my father spit on his hands before splitting kindling, I believed he did it so the axe handle wouldn't slip. Now I know he could unconsciously have been invoking his gods for strength and good fortune in the job. With time, I learned not to take another slice of bread with a piece still on my plate, or someone would go hungry. I learned that quickly swallowing bubbles floating on tea before they broke would ensure wealth. I learned that breaking a mirror, stepping over a grave, spilling salt or killing a spider would inevitably bring misfortune. For each situation there existed a rule of conduct, for each happening a precedent.

Further investigation, however, revealed that folklore wasn't an oracle to guide one's actions or a panacea to cure one's ills. The term was coined in 1846 by an Englishman, William J. Thoms, to designate a study which, while retaining its popularity, was becoming progressively more systematic and scientific. According to Thoms, folklore comprised everything that related to "the traditions, customs, and superstitions current among the common people in civilized countries".<sup>1</sup> As an ever expanding volume of material was assembled, interest intensified and the scope of research broadened. Gradually the term came to include the material culture, the arts and crafts of the people, as well as their intellectual culture. Today, an American folklorist has defined his field in the following terms:

"Old songs, old stories, old sayings, old beliefs, customs and practices—the mindskills and handskills that have been handed down so long that they seem to have a life of their own, a life that cannot be destroyed by print but that constantly has to get back to the spoken word to be renewed; patterned by common experience; varied by individual repetition, inventive or forgetful; and cherished because somehow characteristic or expressive: all this for want of a better word, is folklore."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L. F. Newman, "Folklore" in *Chamber's Encyclopaedia*, 1950 ed., Vol. 5, pp. 762-65.

<sup>2</sup> B. A. Botkin, ed., *A Treasury of American Folklore*, (New York, 1944), p. xxi.



The facts of folklore are now accepted by both historians and ethnologists as an invaluable tool in the study of man's social, intellectual and spiritual development.

This, however, is neither a discourse upon folklore in general, nor a treatise on the insight it provides into human behaviour. It is rather a preliminary effort to discover avenues of folklore investigation in Saskatchewan. Does a genuine Saskatchewan folklore exist? Folklore presupposes an indigenous population of sufficient antiquity to have acquired a tradition. Saskatchewan's population includes, in addition to remnants of Indian tribes who originally occupied the area, a numerous body of immigrant peoples representing nearly all the European races and some of the Asiatic. In some cases these immigrants have segregated themselves into exclusive colonies; in others they are dispersed throughout the province. Gravelbourg and St. Louis, for example, possess a distinctly French heritage, Holdfast and Kronau a German one, while Candiak's roots are Polish and Esterhazy's are Hungarian. In the cities, too, there have developed sections with a pronounced "foreign" flavour, in which the parent languages are spoken and the parent religious and cultural customs followed. But many immigrants who have settled in an established society alien to their own have adjusted their habits to the new mode of life and learned to speak the new language. However, whether they have held aloof or intermingled, these immigrant peoples have lived in Saskatchewan a relatively short time and have retained their original beliefs relatively unchanged. With succeeding generations these beliefs will assume new characteristics imposed by environmental influences; but today Saskatchewan remains a melting pot of diverse peoples, Indian, European, and Asiatic. So for the most part, the lore of Saskatchewan remains the lore of these peoples. This naturally limits the amount and richness of indigenous material.

Perhaps the most widely known of Saskatchewan's folk tales is the legend of Qu'Appelle. E. Pauline Johnson's popularity among school children has, no doubt, contributed in making at least one version familiar. It is the tragic story of the Indian hunter who, hurrying back to his sweetheart, hears a voice crying his name.

"I leaned and listened—yes, she spoke my name.  
And then I answered in the quaint French tongue  
'Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?' No answer, and the night  
Seemed stiller for the sound, till round me fell  
The far-off echoes from the far-off height  
'Qu'Appelle?' my voice came back, 'Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?'"

Arriving at the wigwams, he learns that his sweetheart died calling out his name the very moment he had heard it the previous evening on the lake. And now,

"I listen heartsick, while the hunters tell  
Why white men named the valley the Qu'Appelle."

Blackstrap Coulee, South of Saskatoon, earned its name from a misfortune of another type. Two pioneers were returning home in their buckboard with supplies including a prized barrel of molasses. At an unexpected jolt going up a long incline, the barrel bounced from the buckboard and careened down the slope, slathering precious molasses as it went. There are many stories explaining the origin of



Saskatchewan's rather startling place names. Moose Jaw probably leads the rest. The most frequently told is that Moose Jaw is derived from an Indian word meaning "the place where the white man mended the cart with the jaw bone of the moose"; other versions claim that it was derived from the shape of the winding creek.

Louis Riel has not yet attained the status of a generally accepted "folk hero" in Saskatchewan. The changing popular attitude to this best known figure in our history presents an interesting subject for investigation. Throughout his lifetime and following his execution, his person, his motives and his actions aroused venomous attacks and spirited defense, incredulous contempt and understanding sympathy. Emotional, sensitive and intensely religious, he early became a prey to a feeling of personal insecurity, and obsessed with a terrible anxiety for his race and a mania to rebuild the world. A vivid yet pitiful figure, hero or villain, he seemed destined to become a legend. Today, the influence of agrarian protest movements and sectional feeling has affected the popular attitude to him in the West; this view is also reflected in academic circles, and one scholar has pictured Riel as a pioneer champion of Western rights.<sup>3</sup>

Saskatchewan's popular lore is not wholly bound up in her place names and her history. Her weather has always been a far more common inspiration for wierd and wonderful local talk. The wind, incessant, remorseless, shrilling across the prairies is notorious. The Earl of Southesk struggling through "the glittering white intensity of the cold" in 1859 comments bitterly that "our fate seems to be that to which prophecy dooms a certain ancient family,

"The Tracies

Shall always have the wind in their faces'."<sup>4</sup>

Saskatchewan's recurring drouth is a spectre that looms largely, haunting the thoughts of all. It is as traditional as Montana's, about which the following story is revealing. "An embarrassed Great Falls businessman told the visitors from the East it was unfortunate that they came at such a lean time; but, he said loyally, 'All Montana needs is rain'. A Grand Rapids capitalist looked up Great Falls' blistered Central Avenue, closed his aching eyes against the sun, and thought of the hundreds of miles of parched prairie over which he had come in an oven-hot train, 'Yes', he said quietly, 'and that's all hell needs'."<sup>5</sup>

Another of nature's ways of testing the patience and credulity of Saskatchewan's citizens is the grasshopper. Periodically, hordes of grasshoppers have left a barren desolation in their wake. Though in recent years the spring rains have prevented the scourges of the thirties, few who suffered those infestations have forgotten their experiences and fewer have refrained from elaborating upon them. I remember dreading my job of taking out the garbage to the can which stood at the far end of the garden at the lane. It meant running through a whizzing, stinging barrage, crunching corpses under foot as I ran. The truth about the grasshoppers was so fantastic that people hesitated to bring judgment where bitter

<sup>3</sup> See S. D. Clark's introduction to W. L. Morton's *The Progressive Party in Canada*, (Toronto, 1950), pp. vii-viii.

<sup>4</sup> Southesk, James Carnegie, Earl of, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, (Edinburgh, 1875) pp. 304-305.

<sup>5</sup> Howard, Joseph Kinsey, *Montana, High, Wide and Handsome*, (New York, 1943) p. 201.



reality ended and fantasy began. The story of the young school teacher's heart-broken fury when her silk stockings were eaten off the clothesline aroused sympathy, not disbelief. The story of the bank clerk shovelling grasshoppers off the bank steps in the morning before opening the doors for business was topped by another less conservative. Perhaps other provinces and other states had grasshoppers, but nowhere were they so big, so numerous and so voracious as in Saskatchewan.

Prairie gumbo has been eloquently described and categorically cursed from time immemorial. An apt description was given by Mr. R. E. Duckworth, California Assistant Director of Agriculture in his memorandum on foot-and-mouth disease in Canada: "Should one leave the safety of a surfaced road to travel over a dirt road, the wet gumbo gathers so quickly and thick on the tires as to lock the wheels, making it impossible for them to turn. If one walks over the surface, balls of gumbo gather on the boots so thick and heavy one cannot lift the feet. A horse cannot be ridden over the sticky stuff without it balling up on its feet in great heavy gobs. Until the surface becomes dry from wind and sun, the prairie will limit travel by any means to an absolute minimum".<sup>6</sup>

The Indian's power to foretell the weather for the coming season is folklore which arouses universal interest. Each fall there is a spate of prophecy concerning winter based variously upon the thickness of the animals' fur, the depth of the trees' bark, the size of the saskatoon crop and even the latest radio broadcast (!). Nobody really cares how the Indian knows, almost everybody accepts the fact that he does know. The groundhog is eagerly awaited each February to ascertain when spring will arrive; but an Indian's opinion will completely discredit a groundhog's nonappearance.

This brief excursion into the realm of popular thought and feeling in Saskatchewan serves at least to indicate that there may be more locally inspired or at least locally colored folklore than is evident at first glance. There is need for compilation and systematic organization to anticipate the imminent danger of distortion by alien influences and assimilation within a new social order. There is danger, too, especially in a society as young as ours, that legends may be disproven and lost forever to future generations. For instance, there's the story about the Regina City Hall, which was reputed for decades to have been built without a chimney. It was claimed that after the building was completed, an addition was built in the rear to accommodate this vital, but missing, part. In a city in which the temperatures sometimes hover around forty degrees below zero, the oversight was an astounding feat and made a wonderful story to tell. It was a sorry day when someone examining old plans found the existence of a shaft which proved to be the original chimney. It seems that the soft coal used caused such quantities of black smoke to belch forth and deface the clock, that it was felt advisable to block off that chimney and build a new one in a more suitable location. Perhaps, as so often perversely happens, disproving the story will help entrench rather than dislodge it.

ELIZABETH HEIDT

<sup>6</sup> California. Legislature. Senate. Joint Legislative Committee on Agriculture and Livestock Problems. *Special Report*, 1952, p. 38.



## RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES

### Homestead Days in the McCord District

by ELIZABETH RUTHIG

IN 1907, I married Phil Ruthig, at Kitchener, Ontario. We lived a year and a half at Waterloo and Galt. Then, in 1909, came the great opportunity. My parents, Henry and Caroline Ruhl, though then in their fifties, had the fortitude to come West to the adventure of homesteading, with my two brothers, Jacob and Henry, twenty-three and twenty-one, and a sister, Caroline, sixteen. They persuaded Phil and I to come along, and as we had hoped some day to see the Western plains, we decided this was our chance.

Many were the preparations to be made before leaving. The home and the woolen mill my father owned were sold. Furniture and possessions, along with several horses, were shipped by train. It was sad leaving relatives, friends and home. Many brought food for our lunch and so much accumulated we couldn't begin to eat it all before arriving in the West.

At that time there were settler excursions conveying hundreds of people to the West. I dimly remember the first glimpse of Winnipeg, what seemed like large iron gates that had to be opened by the guard before anyone could pass through from the train. The depot was crowded with people of all nationalities with one goal in mind—the West.

After three days travel by train, sitting on slat seats, not too comfortable, we arrived in Moose Jaw, on March 22nd, 1909. What a drab, dirty place it seemed then. The Nicholsons, from Tuxford, met us at the depot and we women went with them for a week while the men went house hunting and unloaded furniture and stock from the car. A home was located on South Hill and we just got nicely settled when the place was sold. Fortunately, we were able to move to a house next door.

Each day, from a southeast corner on Coteau Street, we watched the pageant of many families in horse and ox-drawn wagons, starting on their long journey to the south, heavily laden with supplies. Often there would be a caravan of from fifty to sixty teams. The stubborn oxen had a weakness for water holes. There was a telephone pole in the centre of a large one, north of our house, east of the trail. It amused us to see oxen head for this hole and stop with one on each side of the pole. Then the driver would have to wade in and tug and pull to get them out, or unhitch them. There were anxious moments for us, wondering what lay ahead for them. We knew our turn was coming.

The Land Office was in Moose Jaw and after waiting our turn and finding where to go, father, husband Phil and brothers Jacob and Henry, left in April with two wagons well loaded with such supplies as lumber, food and bedding. They were fortunate in securing a section and a half of land; a quarter to the



parents, a quarter to the younger brother, Henry, and a half section each to my husband, Phil, and to Jacob. They were away three weeks and during that time they built a "shack" with the lumber.

Shortly after the men left on the trip, we in Moose Jaw heard that a terrible prairie fire had swept southern Saskatchewan. This meant worry and anxious days for us; however, news came through Mr. McArthur, land locator, that our men were safe. Others travelling the same trail had lost food and clothing; horses broke loose and escaped. The fire came during the night when many were in sound sleep, exhausted after a long hard day's journey. Those who did awaken in time prepared for safety by burning a patch of grass and moving their possessions on it. One can little realize the fear that must have seized upon them awakening to see the Western sky a mass of red blaze.



Sod house of the Ruthig family, January, 1910

When the men returned to Moose Jaw we found it wasn't very easy recognizing them at first. Their hair had grown long, beards covered their faces, and they were dusty and tired. After a good bath and clean clothes they went to get a shave and haircut, then to file on the land at the Land Office. We spent a happy and contented evening listening to stories of the first trip to the homestead.

I shall never forget how my mother dreaded the long slow trip ahead of them. My parents were not young, but they were brave, and with the lure for adventure, they left with wagon loads of furniture and supplies. Mother and sister made the trip in a buggy tied behind one of the loaded wagons. Sleeping in a tent was all so new. Mother made sure the axe was at the opening in case of night-prowling wolves, or coyotes. Each day she would inquire, "Father, children, where are you taking us?" and the reply she always got was "over the next ridge of hills and you will see the beautiful, level plains." It seemed there was always another, and another, ridge of hills.



After four long weary days they reached their destination. Then work really began. Slabs of sod were placed around the lumber shack and another room was added—all sod. The inside was plastered with mud, with a nice smooth finish. As the years passed the mud plastering was papered over with building paper. The sod walls were three feet thick. There was a good shingle roof and board floors. It was a warm cosy place. The size was twenty feet by thirty feet. A barn was also built of sod and many poles were used, cut from trees that grew fifteen miles to the south, in the hills.

There were a few land seekers staking claims during the summer, but the families did not come to live on the land until 1910. My folks were there three months without seeing another woman. One day some Indians and a squaw passed through. They were travelling probably to Wood Mountain reserve on what was called "The Old Buffalo Trail." The door was open to all newcomers and soon it was a stopping house. Rates (when paid) were fifty cents a night or a dollar for man and team; twenty-five cents a meal.

It was a busy life. Seventy miles slow travel with horses to Morse for lumber and supplies. Twenty five miles to Wood Mountain, across country to the southeast. Coal was southeast too. People had to dig their own coal. Gardens were planted and produced abundantly in the newly ploughed earth.

In October, 1909, it was my turn to make the trip from Moose Jaw along with my husband, who had the compulsory six month's homestead duties to do. My brothers arrived with two wagons. One wagon was loaded with flour and groceries; the other with lumber. I prepared what I thought was sufficient lunch for the four day journey, but found it didn't last long with three hungry men, always hungry, from walking nearly all day beside the wagon. The second day on the trail it commenced to snow and get colder, me sitting in a rocking chair in the centre of a load of supplies. That night we had to get out the gasoline stove to warm the tent, which made it quite comfortable.

The third day one of the horses went lame, having unfortunately cut its foot on the scythe used to cut hay for feed. This made travelling slower. The horse was tied behind one of the loads and left to hobble along. The load of lumber had to be left in someone's yard and returned for later. By this time the prepared lunch was almost gone—two crusts of bread left. However, by noon we came within a few miles of Gravelbourg, so the men walked to the little village (not as large as McCord in 1950) for bread. All they could get was two small loaves. We satisfied our appetites for the noon meal, but it looked like a scant supper.

Before evening we passed a bachelor's place, Mr. Kuhn's, but not before borrowing baking powder to make biscuits. When we stopped for the night, we brought down lard, syrup and some flour from the provisions and with the borrowed baking powder and a pail of water from a creek nearby, I made biscuits. How we did enjoy the nice hot biscuits and syrup, but all were devoured. While the men watered and tethered the horses for the night, I set to work to make more biscuits for breakfast, but alas, it froze so hard that night the biscuits were like rocks the next morning! I dug out the asbestos toaster and soon all was



ready for hot biscuits, syrup and coffee again. All was eaten up, as before. We did not expect to arrive home till mid-afternoon.

When noon came the horses were fed and watered as usual, but not the humans. The men had a cigarette, while I sat and looked across the vast prairie. It looked a barren land. No trees, no buildings in sight; just prairie and sage brush and a long, long winding trail.

The distance left for the afternoon wasn't too great and soon my brother looked up to where I was sitting on the load and said "See those buildings in the distance?" I strained my eyes and did see something that appeared very low. I was told to watch and soon I'd see someone on the roof, that would be father watching for us. He would then disappear and the chimney would begin to smoke.

When we arrived the bacon was frying and, believe me, we were ready for a good meal. The hunger and the misery of the trip were all forgotten at the joy of seeing our parents. We were now all at home together and happy in a small two-roomed shack.

That winter we lived with my parents. My husband kept busy shingling the roof and laying a floor. We really thought we had struck the "sunny south." It was a real "California winter"—no snow, warm, bright, sunny days. The men were able to work in their shirt sleeves. Their entertainment was "horseshoe."

In November of that year, 1909, Fred Whalley, whom we met in Moose Jaw, and who also came from Ontario, decided to open a store near Mossbank and came down to get my husband to do the building, so away we went with him for a month, I to do the cooking. Before we were ready to return home, on one of his return trips from Moose Jaw, Fred picked up the load of lumber we had left back on the trail. A mattress was placed on top of this load so I would have a comfortable place to sit for the drive home. It worked quite nicely on the level, but going through ravines and creek bottoms the mattress would slide from one side to the other, my husband running to the high side to hang on so I would not fall off. It was quite an experience, but when young it was fun and since has caused many a hearty laugh.

That evening we drove into a yard with a good sized house, occupied by two bachelors, Messrs. Burnell and Lizzee. We asked if they could put us up for the night, and were made welcome. We were chilled through, and while I sat by the fire warming myself, a good meal was being prepared—boiled potatoes and beef steak, seared in deep butter. It was greatly enjoyed.

When it came time to retire our host informed Fred, the driver, we would find a room at the top of the stairs for "you and your wife" and a single bed for "your son." The son referred to was my husband. What an embarrassing moment! While we retired Fred sat on the stairway, then slept in the single bed. This was an incident I'll never forget. It was long considered quite a joke.

Much to our surprise, during January, 1910, the Nicholsons, from north of Moose Jaw, paid us a visit. They had been to their homestead at Willowbunch



and had made the distance with a team and "cutter." With very little snow they found travelling rather difficult.

In the spring of 1910 we built our one room sod shack, with shingled roof and board floor. Inside the ceiling was of V-joint and painted white. Building paper covered the mud plastered walls, then flowered wall paper. Net curtains adorned the three small windows. We were so thrilled with our first little home in the West.

After four years of travelling back and forth to Moose Jaw by wagon—each spring going to spend six months in the city where my husband did carpenter work, each fall returning to the homestead for the winter—we decided to equip ourselves with horses and implements for farm life. Father had done the necessary breaking for homestead duties on our land. So in the fall of 1913 we left Moose Jaw with a load of furniture, making a canopy over all with the linoleum. I sat on a trunk under it, prairie schooner style, so the wind couldn't reach me. That was the last of our journeying back and forth.

In 1914 broncho horses were bought at a hundred dollars each from ranchers to the southeast. What exciting times there were breaking these horses for driving! They were of no use until properly broken. The oxen had been pretty slow going. They could not stand the heat of the day, so it meant early rising. The fields were plowed from dawn till nine in the morning, then out again from five till dusk in the evening.

The first grain was sown by hand, till seed drills were available, or could be purchased. The crop was cut with a mower, raked into long rows with a horse rake, then tied into bundles by hand. In the nice days, during the winter, the bundles, stored in granaries were placed in a wagon box and threshed with a home made flail. The chaff was removed, and to clean the grain for seed a pailful was brought into the house and poured on the table. We would all sit round and pick out the kernels for seed. It took many hours and days, but was a pastime when chill winds blew and snow and blizzards prevailed.

The first loads of grain were hauled to Vanguard, a distance of fifty miles. It usually took three days to make the trip. Soon another railway came, from Moose Jaw to Eastend, in 1913. That, too, seemed a great distance, but by leaving in the early morning and returning late at night, this trip, twenty-two miles to Meyronne, and twenty-two back, could be made in a day.

There were anxious moments when our men went to the hills for coal and wood and did not return when expected. How we would scan the distance, straining our eyes looking at mere specks to see if they moved closer, or were only shadows.

I remember clearly one late fall when the men had gone for coal and wood with two teams. A blinding snowstorm came up, making it almost impossible to travel. The teams were unhitched and the loads were left. The men rode the horses and let them find the way home. Soon they neared a bend in Wood River and, as if by miracle, the sky suddenly cleared. They were only a few feet from plunging over the river bank! Night was closing in, but in the distance they noticed a light, so made straight for it. There they found "Home, Sweet Home."



From that time on there was always a light in the window at night to guide anyone to shelter.

In spite of the trying times there were good times on the prairie too. As the country became more settled, neighbors far and wide gathered at homes for a social evening every two weeks. Many came out from Ontario just as we did. It was a joy to meet these people and talk of old Ontario days. There was some wonderful talent among us. Entertainment took the form of debates, spelling matches, programs, singing, readings and recitations. In summer there were picnics, football and baseball. In winter there was skating and hockey, as well as the social evenings. Dances were few, due to distance and fear of storms. When a storm did arise we would stay till daybreak before venturing home.

My parent's home held the first church services in that part of the country, Presbyterian and Anglican, although they were Lutheran themselves. Crowds were not small. Often both ministers would be there the same Sunday. Mother would make a large basket of sandwiches and all would have lunch. There would be service in the afternoon and evening and those leaving rejoiced that it was a day well spent in worship and praise. I was organist in those days, until the first school was built. Services were then held with student ministers all the year through. A choir was soon started. Sunday School, W.M.S. and Homemakers were organized. There was always something to look forward to—fowl suppers, Christmas concerts, plays.

My mother, a very capable woman, administered to the sick, the needy and the lonely. She was never lonely, or homesick, there was always too much to be done. Father would often disapprove her going over prairie roads, the only conveyance at times being a box on a "stoneboat," but she always insisted, "they need me, I must not let them suffer."

Life on the homestead was good. Through the years there were very good crops and gardens. Hail, grasshoppers and drought were, at first, unknown. Our home was blessed with three children, Gladys in 1915, Calvin in 1920, and Hazel in 1922. The fourteen years in the sod shack were the happiest days of our lives. But the sod homes soon began to crumble and in 1917 my parents built a new home. It was a happy occasion for us when, in 1923, we built a new home too.

It didn't seem long until a railway was built in 1928, and we had a station, McCord, within three miles. The "thirties" were the drought years, cultivated fields blown bare. Grasshoppers were also a plague in those years. Many families left their homes, seeking a better place, but we decided to stick it out, along with others who had put so much into what they had. There were many heart-aches. I was left a widow in 1937, but with Calvin, willing, then sixteen, we managed nicely.

In 1940, after thirty-one years in the West, I had the chance of a trip back to Ontario, by car, to visit relatives and friends. It was a happy reunion, but what changes in thirty-one years! I have had other trips since then, but of the sad and happy memories of the last forty years, those of the good old homestead days are among the ones I like best.



## The Newspaper Scrapbook

THE past two years have been memorable for the great mortality amongst the old residents of this district, the latest addition to the list being Mr. Jacob Beads, of Saskatchewan Forks, who passed peacefully to his rest on the evening of the 14th ult. at the age of 68 years.

Mr. Beads was one of the last—if not the sole survivor—of Dr. Rae's Franklin search expedition and survived his commander, of whom he spoke in terms of high respect, by but a few months. He had also the honor of bringing the first grist mill into the district, the remains of which are still seen in the ruins of the old windmill immediately south of the town . . . . When in the employment of the Hudson's Bay Company, or still earlier while with his father, who was similarly engaged, he travelled extensively through the Territories, but especially through the almost unexplored regions surrounding Hudson's Bay . . . . A member of the Church of England, he was induced through the high personal esteem in which he held the late Bishop McLean to make that denomination the handsome present in 1875 of a large portion of the ground on which Emmanuel College now stands . . . . By his death the settlement loses a good neighbor, who will be much missed and not easily replaced, and the community extends its warmest sympathy to the bereaved family of whom a wife, two married daughters—Mrs. J. S. Letellier and Mrs. Peter Turner—and an unmarried son and daughter survive.

*Saskatchewan Times*, (Prince Albert) April 6, 1894.

THE ORANGE TREE PLANTED IN THE CAPITAL OF THE TERRITORIES . . . . According to announcement, delegates from various parts of the North-West assembled in the large and elegantly furnished lodge room, situate in the Smith and Ferguson block, to organize the first Territorial Grand Lodge. An address was presented to Grand Master Stewart Mulvey, of Winnipeg, to which he replied at considerable length in his usual inspiring and pleasing style.

After the examination of credentials and conferring of degrees the organization was completed and officers chosen as follows: Grand Master, A. G. Hamilton, Moosomin; Deputy Grand Master, R. L. Alexander, Moose Jaw; Assistant Deputy Master, T. J. McWilliams, Moose Jaw; Grand Chaplain, Rev. J. M. Harrison, Regina; Grand Treasurer, F. M. Moore, Moosomin; Grand Secretary, W. J. Kerneghan, Prince Albert; Grand Lecturer, Benj. Barber, Wolseley; Grand Director of Ceremonies, Thomas Fleming, Summerberry; Deputy Grand Secretary, A. Martin, Regina; Deputy Grand Chaplains, Bros. Mattheson, Pine Creek, and Munroe, Calgary.

— *The Standard* (Regina), March 4, 1892.

ROYAL STANDARD READING ROOM. The Committee appointed to make all the necessary arrangements for this Reading Room are able to report good progress. The house lately occupied by Mr. Brydon as a drug store has been secured; the large room is being furnished and will be opened next week. Mr. J. Burghall has been appointed caretaker, his duties will be to keep the reading room open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., for the use of subscribers only, and to attend to all the requirements and comforts expected in such cases. The Lord Bishop of Qu'Appelle



has kindly consented to be the Patron; Mr. Hartley Gisborne is President; the Rev. H. S. Akehurst, Hon. Sec.-Treas., and Mr. W. S. Redpath, Hon. Solicitor, with Dr. Bell, Mr. G. D. MacKay and Mr. W. L. Clark as members of the committee for making all initial arrangements. The following papers and magazines have been either promised or ordered... *The Qu' Appelle Progress*, *Regina Leader*, *Regina Standard*, *Winnipeg Daily Free Press*, *Toronto Daily Mail*, *The Western World*, *Grip*, *Farmers' Advocate*, *Weekly Empire*, *Battleford Herald*, *Littel's Living Age* (for this year), *The Anglo-Saxon*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Scientific American*, *Harper's Monthly*, *The Century*, *Arkansas Traveller*, *The Graphic or Illustrated London News*, *Chamber's Journal*, *Punch*, *Tid Bits*, *MacMillan's Magazine*. All will acknowledge this to be a very good list for a young institution and should the number of subscribers permit the list will be further enriched. The room will be very comfortably furnished and subscriber's ticket will be found well worth the dollar to anyone.

— *The Qu' Appelle Progress*, November 5, 1891.

WE have been shown a letter from Mr. Thos. Spink, of Spink & Maveety, who have established the *Observer* [Times] at Prince Albert, which gives an account of the weary journey these gentlemen had with their plant from Winnipeg to their destination. The letter is dated October 3rd, and was written one day after their arrival in Prince Albert, and as they left Winnipeg in the end of August, they were over a month on their journey. Below Fort Cumberland they were compelled to leave the steamboat on account of low water, and hire a York boat and ox teams to finish the balance of their journey, a distance of over 350 miles. They had some companions in misfortune, as the party numbered thirteen besides the five Indian boatmen. Their plant and other goods were loaded into the boat, and the whole party had to walk on the river bank, and assist in towing the boat. Three weeks of this weary travelling and fifty miles by teams brought them to their destination, and supplied the people of Prince Albert with a press organ.

It would be hard to find a better proof of North-western enterprise than is furnished by this instance, and it shows that the members of the Canadian press are determined in spite of all obstacles to advance in the van of civilization over the great prairies of the North-west.

— *The Commercial* (Winnipeg), October 31, 1882.

C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION. This great work goes on at an astonishingly rapid pace, and it now looks certain that the contractors will have track laid clear to the Saskatchewan River before the close of the year. The running of a passenger train with sleeper attached through to Regina, which commenced on the first of this month, is to be supplemented next week by a daily mixed train from that place to Swift Current Creek, about 150 miles further West. The Company act upon the plan of opening traffic as soon as possible after track is laid, and thus place no obstacle in the way of settlers going West.

— *The Commercial* (Winnipeg), October 10, 1882.





## Golden Jubilee News

When Premier Douglas introduced the act to provide for the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Province of Saskatchewan, he stated the hope that we would achieve "a sense of pride in our historical background . . . a stimulus to those who are interested in art, in music, in drama, in painting and in handcrafts . . . lessons in co-operation and tolerance . . . opportunity for people from various countries to display their national arts . . . and opportunity for Saskatchewan to display its growth and development in the economic field."

A sense of pride in our historical background. This will reach its finest expression in an official history of the province, being prepared under the auspices of the Sub-committee on Historic Sites, Maps and Publications, chaired by Dr. G. W. Simpson, University of Saskatchewan. Jim F. C. Wright, whose work as a historian was established by his *Slava Bohu*, a history of the Canadian Doukhobors, is the author of the Saskatchewan history, with research assistance from Alex Robb, a Regina high school teacher, and illustrated by A. W. Davey of the staff of the Bureau of Publications. An abridged version of the history, designed for senior public school grades, is being compiled by John Archer, Legislative Librarian, and A. M. Derby, Director of Examinations and Registrar, Department of Education.

Because the story of Saskatchewan is a composite of many stories—transportation, education, the Indians, fine arts in the province—at least eleven topics have been approved for treatment in separate booklets, and perhaps also to be bound in a single volume as a supplement to the history.

The commemoration of past events in the life of our people is another important part of the historical sub-committee's program. Historic Sites is now a permanent branch of the Department of Natural Resources, and its director, Mr. J. D. Herbert, is on the Golden Jubilee staff until after 1955, so that his work will be co-ordinated with the Jubilee program.

Mr. Herbert's first task was a complete survey of recognized sites in the province, and a sampling of community attitudes. He reported "deep satisfaction everywhere in the province at the news that a permanent historical sites program was in the offing." He said that most communities were interested in a joint program, but that many had to be reminded that their local history was significant. He was assured of co-operation wherever he went.

Recommendations for more and improved tablets and markers, better roads leading to sites, and more imagination in planning commemorative projects, have come out of the survey. The townsfolk of Fort Qu'Appelle, for example, are planning a different kind of project—a scale model of the old Hudson Bay fort, based on information in survey plans, narrative descriptions and sketches. The fort was probably the only one in the West to have a thatched roof. The part it



played in the history of the West places this site in a position of national importance. A model of this kind will be an attractive and lasting reminder of our historical heritage. The Prince Albert Historical Society is planning a commemorative park at the Peter Pond site. In the vicinity of the re-named Old Wives' Lake, picnic grounds will be established to commemorate the site of the North-West Mounted Police "Cripple Camp" on the great western trek in 1874. These are some of the ways that communities are planning to honor their pioneer days and people. The commemoration might also take the form of a room in some public or historic building to house a local museum, or attractive signboards for old trail locations or ruins and sites of former buildings. The community effort and co-operation which must go into a commemoration project will help to knit our people together in a sense of their common roots and traditions. In the words of the Honorable W. S. Lloyd, "We do get faith for the future by adding up the accomplishments of the past."

Saskatchewan shares her Golden Jubilee with Alberta, and to commemorate the creation of the two provinces by Parliament in 1905, the Post Office Department will issue a four cent stamp designed to illustrate the Jubilee theme.

"A stimulus to those who are interested in the arts" will come out of the Creative Activities Sub-committee, under chairman Dr. W. A. Riddell, Dean of Regina College, and comprising the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Announcement has been made of music awards to Saskatchewan composers in instrumental, vocal and folk music classes, and details of these competitions may be obtained from the Jubilee office. Neil Harris, staff director of music productions, is organizing a Jubilee choir of high school students, to be directed by Don Cowan and Lloyd Blackman, Regina high school music teachers. The choir will have a repertoire of popular music and special Saskatchewan music commissioned for them. They will be available for Jubilee events in the province beginning this year and on into 1955. It is also hoped that they will receive out-of-the-province engagements. Mr. Harris has been commissioned to write and produce a musical revue which will express the mood of Saskatchewan and the laughter of Saskatchewan people in song, dance and skit, just as a stone cairn or a published history tells the story in another medium.

This is a sampling of Jubilee projects now under way. Others are being undertaken by the other Jubilee sub-committees on publicity, tourist promotion, community participation, homecoming and reception, and religious activities. The three-fold purpose of the Golden Jubilee program is to honor our pioneers; to inform Saskatchewan people about their province; and to tell the rest of the world about Saskatchewan! With each issue of *Saskatchewan History* we will bring you further reports of Jubilee News under the Jubilee crest, which means another chapter of the Saskatchewan story in history, in community projects, in music or in art, or in any of the varied phases of the Jubilee program.



## Book Reviews

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE AND WORLD WAR II. By *F. Hedley Auld*. Ottawa: Canada Department of Agriculture, 1953. Pp. 219.

THIS careful and comprehensive work was undertaken at the request of the Federal Department of Agriculture as part of a larger plan to have the wartime activities of all federal departments recorded. The purpose of this large plan is to provide a documentary record of the growth of administrative activities in wartime so that valuable experience gained in mobilizing the nation's resources may not again be lost. There was no such comprehensive record of administration available at the commencement of the second World War.

The work under review fulfills this purpose in respect to the Canadian Department of Agriculture. It is a solid, impersonal statement of facts, thoroughly documented and tabled, divided into chapters and sub-divided into topic sections. The lack of a proper index, and adequately paged table of contents is an oversight which the Department of Agriculture or the Queen's Printer would be well advised to correct.

The method followed by the author is to portray the intentions of the planners by citing the relevant Order-in-Council or administrative directive, tracing the formulation of the several boards of control, committees of liaison, and supervisory organs, and then proving the effectiveness of the planning by citing statistics of output. In most cases the statistics move comfortably in the direction desired by those responsible, but often only after necessary amendments to policy have been made.

The use of this method, with a minimum of personal comment by the author, renders the book valuable beyond its intention. To the social scientist prepared to make close study of the material it will reveal much about the growth of government by executive power.

Planning to increase, or in some instances decrease, production in special commodities involved the bureaucrat in a realm of action normally beyond his scope: first, the decision as to what shall be produced and in what quantities; second, how to gain comprehensive control over the industry most wholly characterized by small scale free enterprise. Depending upon the predilections of the social scientist the process can be viewed either as the success of central control over a profit motivated industry, or as the mushroom growth of bureaucracy in attempting to harness the individual entrepreneur to executive desires. In either instance the presence of one well-defined aim, that of winning the war, must be allowed.

The study is of interest as well to readers less concerned with the larger problem of governmental control. There are at least two further problems illustrated by Dr. Auld's findings. To the reader concerned with the problems of production there is here illustrated a model showing the workings of a competitive industry where price has lost its pre-eminence. Here is shown action and reaction between the many factors involved in securing the desired output in a number of



products, most of them rivals for the same resources of land, labor, machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, and etcetera. The story is told of the procedures adopted to ensure that there should be produced the required volumes of various agricultural crops, and the changes which had to be made when nature proved more or less bountiful than man had planned. All of this planning had to move under the ceiling imposed on the selling prices of agricultural products by the Wartime Prices and Trades Board, which meant that incentives other than price had to be relied upon. Not having the power to regulate prices freely, attempts were made to regulate the farmer's cost of production in order to leave a margin of income sufficient to stimulate production as planned and to keep up income in the agricultural segment of the wartime economy. One is forced to conclude that this policy was as successful as it was because the industries supplying the farmer with his necessities for production being essentially less competitive were more amenable to direct control: they were dependent upon government for priority of raw materials, and for subsidies, and being numerically fewer, the physical task of direct control was easier than in agriculture itself.

The second point of interest arises out of the overall consideration which had always to be given to the prairie region and wheat production in formulating agricultural policies. Unlike the first World War wheat was not a scarce commodity in the last war. Yet land utilization in the West is fundamental in the successful application of policy to coarse grains, feed, livestock, root crops, vegetable oils and fibres. Obviously, livestock production depends upon the prices of coarse grains which in turn depends upon the incentive to grow or not to grow wheat. Not so obviously, but equally important, the book shows that the utilization of land for the production of oil seeds, fibres and root crops depends upon prices of coarse grains which is determined by the price of wheat. In a price regulated economy the solution is simpler; when price regulation cannot be allowed to operate freely some other devices must be found. The two chief devices were wheat acreage reduction incentives and the initial payment for wheat. The former device enabled wheat production to be cut in areas where alternative crops were not successful, yet maintained prairie farm income. The latter device was discovered to be a more important regulator of wheat production than the final price, which could not be predetermined with the same accuracy.

The three final chapters are almost in the category of appendices. They deal less with specific types of agricultural control, more with the general topics of agricultural research and dominion provincial administrative co-operation. The final chapter on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is both instructive and interesting as a unit: as related to the topics chosen from the book for review here it is a valuable supplement.

This book is not available through regular commercial channels but through the Queen's Printer. It is a reference book, of interest primarily to those concerned with governmental administration, agricultural marketing, and economic history.

The writer, Francis Hedley Auld, MBE., LL.D., has been associated with Canadian agriculture since 1906. From 1916 to 1946 he was Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan. On his retirement he was elected Chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan.

F. W. ANDERSON.



HISTORY OF MONTMARTRE, SASK., 1893-1953. By Rev. Roméo Bédard, O.M.I. Montmartre, 1953. Pp. 97, illus. mimeo.

Some of us may have wondered how Montmartre, the name of a district in Paris, came to be attached to a community in the middle of the Canadian prairie. The answer may be found in the *History of Montmartre*, by Father Roméo Bédard, O.M.I. The founder of the Canadian Montmartre, Pierre Foursin, was the private secretary to the first Canadian High Commissioner to Paris. About 1890, a cabinet minister from Ottawa suggested that he become a colonization agent to bring French colonists to Western Canada. As a result of this suggestion the Foncier Society of Canada was formed. For their projected colony the Society secured land near Wolseley because there were several French Canadian farmers in the district and it was felt that they could assist the colonists in adapting themselves to the new country.

The first settlers arrived in the district in the spring of 1893. The story of the colony is given in considerable detail, particularly for the period 1893 to 1898, the year which brought the end of its connection with the Foncier Society. In describing the experiences of the settlers, Father Bédard gives us a picture of pioneer life on the prairie: the building of their homes, from the first sod-covered dwellings; their first encounter with a prairie fire and the measures taken to prevent further disasters; their difficulties with the Society in attempting to obtain from it what their contracts had promised them. We learn of their everyday activities, of their work and their recreations—the celebration of their feast days, the first wedding in the colony, and the entertainment provided for notable guests such as A. E. Forget, Henri Bourrassa, and the Hon. Israel Tarte, then Minister of Labour in the federal government, who visited Montmartre in 1896.

CHRISTINE MACDONALD

THE PROMISED LAND. By C. Wetton. Lloydminster *Times*, 1953. Pp. 73, illus.

In this booklet Mrs. C. Wetton of North Battleford, well-known for her historical articles in Saskatchewan newspapers, effectively tells the story of the Barr Colony. This is one of the most interesting colonization attempts in the North-West Territories. The origin of the colony, the founding of Lloydminster, and its subsequent growth to the prosperous agricultural and oil-producing community of today are told in detail, reflecting careful reading of letters, documents, and early newspapers.

The cover is attractively designed and a number of appropriate illustrations included. The table of contents is an admirable feature, often lacking in local histories. Unfortunately, some of the chapter headings have been mixed, an error which should be corrected in further editions. Written in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the colony, the costs of publication were met by some fifteen donors in order that proceeds of the sale might go to the Bishop Lloyd Foundation.

After reading this inspiring account, one can agree with Mrs. Wetton that the "story of Lloydminster reflects the dauntless courage of a valiant host that knew neither halt nor retreat" and that the like of Bishop Lloyd, their leader, "will never more tread . . . (the) prairie trails."

ALLAN R. TURNER



## Notes and Correspondence

WE are pleased to reproduce here a statement by the Treasurer of the Canadian Historical Association regarding the activities of the Association and the benefits of membership in it. We feel sure that many readers of *Saskatchewan History* who are not already members of the Association will be interested in the work of this national organization and will wish to support it by becoming members.

The Canadian Historical Association was founded in 1922. It is a national society, having for its object the encouragement of historical research and public interest in history, and more particularly in the history of Canada, both national and local.

The Association holds annual meetings, usually in conjunction with those of other Canadian national societies, in various parts of Canada. The papers read at these meetings are printed in the Association's annual report, which has been published for some thirty years and constitutes an important contribution to Canadian historical scholarship. All members receive a copy of the report. The Association proposes to publish other historical studies, etc., as circumstances may permit. A series of semi-popular pamphlets which it is expected will be of considerable assistance to teachers of history is now in the course of preparation. The pamphlets will be distributed free to members and offered for sale to the general public.

The Association has an active local history committee which is endeavoring to contact local and regional societies with a view to assisting them in their activities. The local history committee hopes to be able to keep local societies informed with regard to the activities and publications of other societies.

Members may obtain subscriptions to the *Canadian Historical Review* and the *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques* at reduced rates. In recent years the Association has been able to offer some financial assistance to enable members from distant parts of the country to travel to the annual meeting.

The Canadian Historical Association invites all persons and institutions interested in the study of history to become members.

The Association offers membership and joint membership as follows and at the rates quoted:

Life membership.....	\$65.00 or more
Membership.....	3.00 per year
Student membership including subscription to the Canadian Historical Review or to the Bulletin des Recherches Historiques.....	3.00 per year
Membership and including subscription to the Canadian Historical Review or to the Bulletin des Recherches Historiques.....	5.00 per year
Membership and including both of the above noted publications.....	6.00 per year



Arrangements have been made for a combined membership in the Association and in the Canadian Political Science Association at a reduced rate of \$8.00 per year. These combined memberships include subscriptions to both the Canadian Historical Review and the Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science.

For further information, address the Treasurer of the Canadian Historical Association at the Public Archives, Ottawa, Canada.

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With this issue we inaugurate a new feature, "Golden Jubilee News," prepared by the staff of the Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee, Government Insurance Building, Regina. The purpose of this news report is to provide our readers with a brief summary of developments in the various fields of Jubilee activity, with special reference to matters of historical interest.

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Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaire No. 6 on pioneer farming experiences will be circulated shortly. This questionnaire has been prepared after consultation with a number of authorities on Saskatchewan agricultural history, and will be the means of preserving much valuable information possessed by our pioneers and not recorded in other ways.

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Mrs. Thomas Storry of Bladworth writes that the articles in *Saskatchewan History* are much appreciated by pioneers in her community. "I also notice," she writes, "it is awakening an interest in our home province among my daughter's friends. Before now other places had a more enthralling tale to listen to, but as they grow older this place has a story for their ears. I hope other children have the opportunity to enjoy *Saskatchewan History*."

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Mr. Roy Wrigley of 201 Edgewater Apts., West Vancouver, B.C., is interested in hearing from old timers who may know something of the activities of the Saskatchewan Telephone Co. Ltd. and the franks issued by it. This company was one of three whose interests were acquired by the Department of Railways, Telegraphs and Telephones in 1909.

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MRS. Peter Cropp, of Gerald, Sask., confesses her inattention to the ball game at one of the Saltcoats Sports Days in recent years when she found herself sitting next to a gentleman wearing an "Old Timer" ribbon, and became engaged in conversation with him. He later sent her a written account of one of the stories of early times which he related that day, and she in turn forwarded it to *Saskatchewan History*. The gentleman in question, Mr. Fred S. Baines, of Saltcoats, points out that he personally witnessed all the events related. The hero of the incident, Mr. Eakin, whom Mr. Baines remembers as a "fearless, forceful man of exceptional ability," was later Speaker of the Assembly of the North-West Territories. Mr. Baines tells the story as follows:

It was the year 1885.

The Indian Rebellion under the direction of Louis Riel was causing considerable trouble on the plains of . . . Assiniboia [one of the subdivisions of the North-West Territories]. I, a boy of ten, left alone in charge of my younger brother and sister, was startled by a young man



rushing into the house, badly frightened and in fear of his life. He was quite new to the country, and what he had seen seemed to him to be an approaching massacre. He had run two miles to tell his news, which was a mass demonstration of the local Indians, aided and abetted by some young men of neighboring tribes, who had incited them to violence.

My father was contacted, and leaving the young man from the East with the two younger children, my father and I set off for the settlement where the Indians had congregated. On the way we met a good Indian we called John, coming to . . . tell us he was doing all he could to keep the others in hand, but wanted my father to be there to assist Mr. Eakin, the head of the colony, in controlling the bad element among the throng.

Before reaching the village of Crescent Lake (two or three houses and some tents), we heard the discharge of firearms, and feared the worst. Upon arriving we were just in time to see a body of Indians, four abreast, about 30 men in all, headed by an Indian Chief, Oka Neesh (in English, "Little Bones") of the local reserve—trotting into the main thoroughfare before the hotel . . . . Scattered about were 100 squaws, men, women, and children, their ponies, travois and two-wheeled Red River carts, with colts and dogs . . . .

The fighting men and their leader, Oka Neesh, were stripped to breech-clouts and moccasins and painted to the full in war paint—red, black and yellow. Also some of the papooses were similarly painted in imitation of their fathers. An interpreter, John Fox by name (dressed in white man's clothes) and a half-breed, stepped forward and was met by Mr. Eakin, my father . . . [and three other men of the settlement].

Asked by Mr. Eakin what this demonstration meant, the half-breed gave this explanation:

The rebellion of Louis Riel was on. Some local successes had made the Indians war-mad. The object was to subdue the white man by force, if necessary, and this was a start locally, to help the uprising along. The Indians wanted arms, ammunition and food in large quantities. If refused they meant to use force to acquire it. Some of the younger men were hard to control. Some people might get hurt. Better to agree to their demands and save bloodshed.

Mr. Eakin . . . listened carefully and said, "Yes, but first, let us hold a council campfire and a pow-wow. Let the people form up and get the music of the tom drums going, then we will talk the whole thing over." The interpreter explained fully to Oka Neesh the suggestion, and he finally agreed and gave the order to get busy. Instantly, as evening was approaching, everyone got busy gathering fire wood, selecting the site for the pow-wow on a long hillside.

Mr. Eakin then issued some rations to the Indians, flour, tea and sow belly, and wisely . . . fed . . . the hungry horde. After 'the multitude had devoured the loaves and fishes' a council fire was lit, and the Chief, Oka Neesh, the leading fighting man, and the most important man of all, the half-breed interpreter, John Fox, circled the camp fire. An outer ring of the main body, the pow-wow circle, consisting of the squawmen, the squaws, young and old, ranging down to papooses, wapooses, and even some babies swinging in their cradles on the backs of their devoted mothers, made up a concourse of about 75 souls.

The musicians, with their tom toms and beating sticks, squatted



cross-legged on the ground within the outer circle, and at the order to let loose, the din began. "Tum, tum, tum, tum, tum, tum" . . . In a short time, every man, woman and child in the outer circle was swaying and weaving to the monotonous vibrations of the tom-toms, "Tum, tum, tum, tum, tum, tum." They were inspired.

An aged man in breech-clout only, sprang up, gesticulating wildly and fired his musket in the air.

The pow-wow was on . . . Fifteen minutes or so and a halt was called.

Silence.

The chief, Oka Neesh, the interpreter, and Mr. Eakin advanced to the centre. As it was a war-time gesture, no pipe was offered . . .

Oka Neesh spoke first. He was a fiery man, six feet, raw-boned and not at all handsome, dressed in belt and war bag, with a raw-hide sheath and big knife hanging handy. He also was painted red, black and yellow, with eagle feathers in his hair hanging in two braids down his back. He summarized briefly—"The Indians had a grievance. The government had not lived up to its promises. It had usurped their lands. The white man had killed off all the buffalo, and burned up the prairies, destroying all the natural game. The Indians were starving, were, in fact, desperate, so leaders had undertaken to drive out the white man, and bring things back once more to a normal condition. They wanted arms and munitions. They wanted all the food there was, and, in short, were there to take possession by force if necessary.

He fired his gun into the air.

The chief had spoken.

After five other Indians had spoken, some indulging in mystic grimaces and idle boastings, the chief called on Mr. Eakin.

Mr. Eakin started slowly. He reviewed the grievances. He explained that the government had taken steps to remove the injustices, but, at the same time, they did not intend to have a few Indians dictate. He told them to restrain themselves or it would be the worse for them.

Then he warmed up, snatched the cap off his head, jumped on it and defied . . . [them all]. "Let one hostile act be perpetrated, one shot fired to kill, and then *my* rifles will speak," he said. "Ten repeating rifles are in the surrounding bush awaiting the signal to fire, and the first to fall will be Oka Neesh and his merry men."

This was a colossal lie, but the bluff worked admirably. The Indians looked over their shoulders, but did not offer to touch . . . [their] muzzle loaders.

Mr. Eakin told them further [that if] . . . they did shoot to kill and some one was hurt, the white Queen Victoria would send thousands of red-coats to avenge them, the chiefs and leading men would be taken, hanged from the poplar trees and the crows would pick their eyes out. The women and children would be spared and fed. Again he shook his fist in their faces. "Now I will give you half the tea, flour and sow belly in the store. You can have a feed, then pack up and go back to your reserves and all will be well. I have spoken—what about it?"

. . . They decided to accept and the incident was closed.



A letter from Mrs. A. E. Freeborn (formerly Georgina Miller) of Prince Albert contains the following account of her parents' experiences following their decision to leave Huron Country, Ontario and settle in Western Canada:

There were seven altogether—Mr. and Mrs. Miller and five children: so, on April 20, 1870, they left their home in Wroxeter, Ontario and drove to Seaforth, the nearest town, twenty six miles. They travelled by train to St. Cloud, Minnesota, as far west as the railroad extended. They stayed there two weeks getting an outfit together for the five hundred mile trek to Fork Garry, Winnipeg. The outfit consisted of a team of horses, a yoke of oxen and covered wagons or prairie schooners in which they rode by day and slept by night. The old trail followed along the Red River.

When they left camp in the morning they could see the bend in the river where they would camp at noon. It was the only place where they could get wood fires. They were continually getting stuck in mud-holes, and mosquitoes swarmed around them in clouds. There was no rest for them day or night. After four weeks travelling they arrived in Pembina on the Boundary. They had just crossed into Canadian territory when four men rode out from camp and stopped them. They said they had been sent by Riel to stop them and all Canadians from going to Fort Garry. Father asked 'What if we go in spite of your orders?' The spokesman said 'We will not stop you, but if you do go on you will be put in prison and everything will be taken from you'. Father recognized that it would not be wise to face that, so he camped on the banks of the Red River for three months, until the soldiers under the command of Colonel Wolseley arrived, and then got his prairie schooners ready and started for Fort Garry.

They arrived at Fort Garry, or Winnipeg, as it was called later, and found it to be a little village of about two hundred and fifty inhabitants, with a saloon in every corner selling Hudson Bay Rum. They lived in Fort Garry one winter and took up a homestead fifteen miles out, where the Penitentiary now stands. They remained there two and a half years, meeting some people, among them Morrison McBeath and family, Peter Henderson and family and several young men who were going to Prince Albert. One of the young men was Dan Cameron, brother of Mrs. Kirkby, Mrs. Keenan and William Bishop of Lily Plain. Father and his family decided to go along with them. With the party were four wagons, thirty carts and ninety head of cattle and some chickens.

They were six weeks on the way, ploughing through mud and fording rivers and creeks. One of the ponies played out. Father un-hitched it and turned it loose, caught one of the cows and hitched her to the cart. She went off without any trouble so accustomed was she to following along. The only Indians they saw on the trip were some sitting on a hill. They camped soon after dinner and the Indians came over to the camp. One of them was Chief Beardy who joined the rebels at Duck Lake in the Riel Rebellion of 1885 . . . .

The next day they arrived at the South branch of the Saskatchewan River and at Aleck Fisher's crossing there was a ferry with a rope cable. The water was very high. It was a custom to take carts and wagons across in a scow and make the horses and cattle swim the river. This they positively refused to do. They spent a whole day trying to drive them in. It took three long days to move the outfits from the south bank to the north. Only one cow swam all the way, and she followed her



calf on the scow. On the very last trip over there were on the scow Mrs. Dan Shannon (Hannah McBeath, then aged thirteen) and her mother, Mrs. Morrison McBeath, and Mrs. Jack McKenzie (Margaret Miller, then aged twelve years). It looked as if the scow would go under so the ferryman threw off the cattle in midstream.

They arrived in Prince Albert on July 13, 1873, and had dinner with the Reverend and Mrs. Vincent, who were supplying for the Reverend James and Mrs. Nesbit, on furlough in the East. Mr. Traill who was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company Reserve here showed father a half section of land and broken front, east of the Hudson's Bay Company Reserve, and on this land he squatted as there was no Survey or Land Office for years after. This piece of land became known as Miller's Hill and still is. He lived on the river bank for nearly two years.

In the spring of 1875 the ice jammed in the river causing it to overflow its banks. With his family Father got out of bed at 6 a.m. and started for the Hill in a wagon. His daughter Margaret had a favorite calf she did not want to leave behind and tried to take it. But a calf can be very contrary and before long she was up to the waist in water. It was hard to leave the calf and get on the wagon. They camped on the hill for three days. There were three feet of water in the house. The hens that had been brought from Winnipeg were all drowned.

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## Contributors

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